Ventura PUBLICATIONS

CLASSIC WARBIRDS

number 7

USAAF Spitfires

Bader's Mk V

RAAF B-24s

Boomerangs

CLASSIC WARBIRDS

Number 7

– A famous Spitfire –

From the left; Sergeant Jeffrey West (RNZAF), Sergeant Brewer, Sergeant Mabbett and Pilot Officer Hepple, with Spitfire Mk VA W3185, the personal aircraft of Wing Commander Douglas Bader.

The 'boot kicking Hitler out of Europe' cartoon is similar to that which appeared on Bader's Battle of Britain Hurricane, but now with a roughly shaped map of Europe as a background. (J. West)

No. 7 in the Classic Warbirds series

Introduction

Famous names such as Douglas Bader, have lived in our memories long after the events that first brought them to public attention have faded into history. But what of the thousands of other airmen who served in all theatres during the Second World War?

The first chapter in this Classic Warbirds is based on an interview with the late Squadron Leader Jeff West, who was Bader's Number 2 the day he was shot down. He fills in some new details of Bader's shooting-down and brings new insight into the markings of his Spitfire Mk Va. Jeff West's career, defending Malta and developing high-altitude Spitfires in Egypt, is also touched on.

Wing Commander Warren Schrader's first combat tour in the Mediterranean is covered and alongside are many South African pictures from the SAAF Spitfire squadrons who shared airfields with Schrader's unit.

One of our priorities is to publish pictures in large format in order to make them most useful to enthusiasts and modellers alike. Certainly some of the images in the American Spitfire gallery benefit from this treatment, along with those describing Japanese surrender schemes, Australian B-24 Liberators and Boomerangs.

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Squadron Leader Jeff West DFM, 1912 -1998

Jeffrey George West volunteered for the RNZAF shortly after the outbreak of war and was called up in May 1940. He was the youngest of five brothers with the others all serving in the Army. After initial training in New Zealand, he shipped out to England and undertook his final operational training at No. 58 OTU. His first flight in a Spitfire was on 3 March 1941, in Mk I L1018.

The Tangmere Wing

Sergeant West's first operational posting was with 616 Squadron based at Tangmere, on the south coast of England. There, Douglas Bader, the famous legless fighter pilot, was one of the newly appointed three-squadron Wing Commanders. Bader was two and a half years older than Jeff West who, at 28, was older than most RAF pilots at that time and at the upper age limit for operational fighter pilots. The squadron had a complement of 24 pilots and 18 aircraft with it's activity consisting of training flights, in preparation for the RAF's summer offensive over occupied Europe. 'Bader was a fantastic bloke, he really was,' remembered West. Bader was then one of the RAF's leading aces and held in awe by those he commanded.

On 7 June 1941 Jeff West made his first offensive patrol over France, a flight lasting 1 hour 50 minutes in a Spitfire Mk II, as part of a Wing strength patrol. As the Tangmere Wings summer campaign intensified, West recorded his first combat success, one Me 109 damaged near Lille on 7 August 1941, flying Mk Vb W3424.

'A Flight' 616 Squadron, shortly after Jeff West joined the Squadron.

From the left, back row; Sergeant McCairns, Pilot Officer Philip 'Nip' Hepple, Flight Lieutenant Kenneth Holden (Flight Commander). Pilot Officer Johnnie Johnson (eventually the RAF's leading Ace), Sergeant George Mabbett (killed 1941). Crouching; Sergeant Jeffrey West and Sergeant Brewer (killed 1941). (J West)

While the RAF Squadrons, including the Tangmere Wing, engaged the Luftwaffe with the latest Mk II and V versions, Spitfire Mk Is were taken up by Operational Training Units (OTUs). Spitfire MK I AR213 'JZ-E' of No. 57 OTU, was given this spectacular red, white and blue nose. Note the serial repeated on fin flash and that the rear of the Sky fuselage band is in line with the angled frame No.19. (via P. Arnold)

Circus No.68 – 9 August 1941

On the fateful day of Bader's demise, Jeff West flew as his No.2 in Spitfire Mk Vb W3517. In his log book for 9th August, West made notes regarding 1½ Me 109F's destroyed. The half victory was credited following Bader re-interpreting events of a combat several days earlier, when West had also flown as his No.2. After that mission Bader saw that the doped patches covering West's gun ports were broken and realised that West had also fired his guns at a particular Me 109. Bader insisted that the victory may well have been partly achieved by West, even though West felt sure the victory was Bader's alone ('I had only given the 109 a squirt for good luck'). Jeff West was subsequently credited with half this victory at a time when leading aces, the likes of Malan, Tuck and Bader, were on scores of 19 and 20 each and the RAF was emphasising their victory totals, as a propaganda tool. This incident struck the then Sergeant West as a tremendous show of Bader's generous leadership style.

'Several days before Circus No.68, Wing Commander Bader gathered all the Tangmere Wing pilots, including the Sergeants (the RAF seemed to regard Sergeant Pilots as a necessary evil – we were never asked to contribute to discussions on tactics – never!) He spoke to us as a group, after a Wing photograph, and made the comment, that it had come to his notice that the No.2's were "wet nursing" the No. 1's. Remember that the finger-four formation was a relatively new innovation in Bader's wing. The Wing Commander continued, "My job is to get you to where the enemy is, and your job is to shoot them down. After an engagement, immediately join up with the nearest Spitfire you see. Preferably, join up with your leader, but don't just fly around France – or anywhere else – on your own." Bader stressed this point, 'My job

Another training Spitfire was this Mk V of No.53 OTU in 1943. Note the thin, hand-painted code letters, similar to the aircraft above.

A good impression of the upper cowling shape, over the Merlin engine's rocker covers, is gained from this angle (M. Mayston)

Two photos of Spitfire VB AA722 'AZ-B', of 234 Squadron. Pilot Officer D. N. McLeod was shot down and made a prisoner of war, on 12 February 1942, flying this aircraft.

This Spitfire wears the Day Fighter scheme which came into force in August, 1941. *Ocean Grey,* or possibly a darker mixed grey, has been applied over the original factory-applied *Dark Earth.* Therefore the serial has been over-painted on the fuselage and reapplied in small hand lettered characters at the base of the fin. In the lower photo, recovery workers are disassembling the Spitfire, while a Luftwaffe Officer supervises. (via W. Matusiak)

is to get you to where the enemy is - your job is to shoot them down.'

Dive and scatter

'I thought that Bader was tired and anxious by that stage (August 1941).

I recall the weather was pretty mucky the day we lost the Wing Commander. Over France, there were about 17 German aircraft sighted coming up, but well below us, and Douglas called "Right chaps, we're going down." The four of us in his flight, went down and the rest of the Squadron (initially) stayed up. I wouldn't have attacked from that height. We were about 5000 feet above them and came screaming down, Bader, myself, Dundas and Johnson.

Spitfire Mk V AA854 'WX-G' of 302 (Polish) Squadron, summer 1942. Note the light, non-standard, colour over parts of the Day Fighter camouflage. (J.B. Cynk via W. Matusiak)

I had one (Me 109) just come up (into my sights) and was getting ready to "press the tittie" when I realised I had picked the same one as Douglas; I had to look for another one. The 109 to the left went up in a screaming turn so, with Bader's instructions not to "wet nurse" the No.1 in mind, I thought, ah! I'll go after him because I had all the speed in the world. So I pulled up, across Douglas, after this Me 109 that went up and I think that Douglas followed *his* 109 down.'

During this initial dive down, Pilot Officer Johnson also swung his Spitfire from the right side of the diving quartet to the left, beneath and out of sight of West. All four pilots jockeyed to take a shot.

'All the 109's, except the one I fired at, turned on their backs and dived down. Remember that we still had eight Spitfires above us as top cover. When I pulled my nose up to fire I nearly rammed this 109. I nearly put my port wing through his cockpit. I could see the German pilot slumped in his cockpit. I felt that he had been shot by me as I was the only one who fired at him.

My immediate thought was "I've shot someone." As a Christian, I thought "I've done him." That was the first thought that swept through my mind. I believe I had that thought because I could see him at such close quarters.

At this point the 109 spun and I spun on top of him. When I came out of the spin there was nothing in sight, nothing! All my instruments were tumbling, the compass going like a yo-yo. However, I knew the position of the sun and so then realised the direction of England. I gradually settled down and collected my thoughts. I put plenty of speed on realising I was on the right vector for "mother and home."

At this point I saw two aeroplanes away down below, just above the cloud, so I headed for them. As I approached I saw one was an Me 109 and the other a Spitfire giving chase. I had the altitude so I sped after them and as I was catching up they both went into a climb, the starboard aileron came off the 109 and the Spitfire flew away. So I closed on the 109 and gave him the rest of my ammunition, which was quite a few rounds, and then chased after the Spitfire, down through the cloud layer.

I got over the French coast on the way home by myself and I suddenly thought "My God! I've lost the C.O. Maybe he's in the sea." So I flew

up to Gravelines, then came back looking for anyone in the water, but didn't see anything.

By the time I got back to Tangmere, all our squadron's pilots were down. When they saw me they asked "Where's the Wing Commander" and I replied "My God, I've lost him!.'"

The pilots gathered, anxious about the fate of Bader. After giving his account of the day's engagement, other pilots confirmed seeing West's victory and his Spitfire spin on top of the Me109; he was credited with a 'destroyed'. His account of the later sighting of a Spitfire shooting an aileron off an Me 109, was accepted as confirmation of a Johnnie Johnson victory – Johnson had recounted his version of events before West landed.

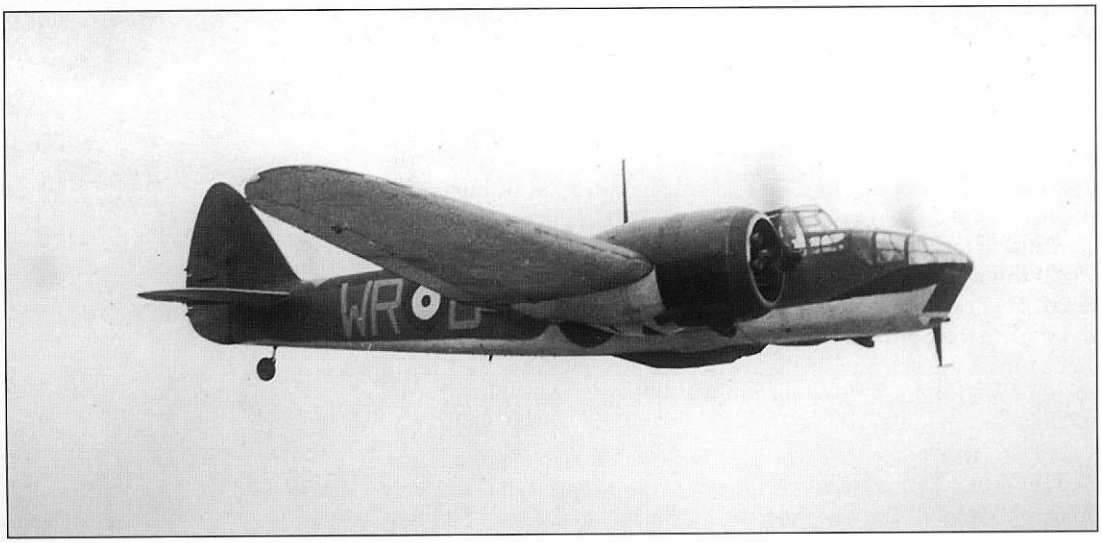
'In Dogsbody section's initial dive, Johnnie Johnson become separated from Cocky. I don't know what happened to Cocky. He never shot at anything, apparently. But, we were split up in a matter of seconds when in the initial dive, we dropped 4-5000 feet with power on, so we would have been travelling at about 450mph.'

How was Douglas Bader lost?

'As far as how Douglas Bader was lost? No one knows, it is all conjecture. I was as close to him as anybody, and I don't think he was shot down. I think somebody crashed into him and cut his tail off. When a flight of Spitfire Mk Vs, (which do not have fuel injection) dives, you all turn on your backs and you cannot see what is under your wings.

One thing that disturbs me is this information in *'Bader's Tangmere Spitfires'*. Dilip Sarkar, the author, relates that we were diving down on only four Me 109's. My recollection is that there were at least seventeen of them.

Squadron Leader Colin Gray with two of his ground crew at Kings Cliffe, January 1942. Gray took command of 616 Squadron in September 1941, while they were on rest. His Spitfire Mk VB is finished in the Day Fighter camouflage scheme of *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey* upper surfaces with *Medium Sea Grey* lower surfaces. Spinner, code letters and rear fuselage band are *Sky*. Note the Squadron Leader's pennant painted beneath the windscreen. (B. Gray)



Bristol Blenheim Mk IV 'WR-D' of 248 Squadron. Some Circus operations were constructed around nothing more than the escort of a few Blenheims, which were to bomb targets in occupied France. (G.M. Baird)

The last thing that Douglas said was "plenty more chaps – don't all fire at the same one" and view of the lecture he gave us several days before Circus No.68, he'd have shot me if I'd fired at the same 109 as him!

To this day, I've have no conscience that I did not do what I was supposed to do. Although I regret following his instructions (in selecting an independent target) because he was worth more than a 109.'

A crashed 616 Squadron Spitfire Mk VB draped in white cloth so as to warn patrolling friendly aircraft not to shoot it up. By the same token, enemy aircraft may well have been encouraged to do so! The photo was probably taken while the squadron was resting in Lincolnshire. (J. West)

Tactics

'All of the tactics developed at that time by Douglas Bader and Cocky Dundas were copied from the Germans. If it hadn't been for Douglas and the ideas he imbued us with such as the finger-four formation, the RAF would still have flown the line-astern formation.'

Posted on Rest.

Shortly after Bader was lost, 616 Squadron moved to Lincolnshire for rest. The squadron left behind its Spitfire Mk VBs for 41 Squadron which replaced it in the South. The machines left behind were later production VBs with metal, rather than fabric covered ailerons.

'We travelled north by train, because the weather was not good enough to fly. I recall that Johnnie Johnson, Philip 'Nip' Hepple, Roy Marples and myself were the only pilots still on the Squadron from the time I joined. Colin Gray, who was a beautiful pilot and a great chap, was promoted in to command the Squadron, in September 1941.'

Jeff West had been commissioned by then and decorated with the Distinguished Flying Medal. Through a series of circumstances, West found himself with a Malta posting and was one of the first group of experienced Spitfire pilots flown to Malta, by Sunderland flying boat.

Following an unauthorised night, low-flying, incident, 'Nip' Hepple was removed from the squadron. He had been 'A' Flight commander and now as senior pilot on that Flight, West lead it for a week or two. He fully expected to be promoted to Flight Lieutenant, with a pay rise, and be confirmed as 'A' Flight leader. However, Gray chose Pilot Officer Murray, a newly arrived Canadian with no combat experience. West felt angry about this and confronted Gray with his dissatisfaction and requested another posting.

616 Squadron was now based at Wittering, with fellow New Zealander Pat Jameson as Wing Commander (Flying) and Group Captain Basil Embry as Station Commander. Jameson took West to visit Embry and discuss the situation. The result was a posting to 610 Squadron at Drem in Scotland, with a promotion to Flight Lieutenant and as a Flight Commander. However, before West could head north, volunteers for service overseas were called for. Being from New Zealand, Jeff West was already overseas and so the thought of a promotion, combined with a posting to a warmer climate, was most appealing. His last flight with 616 Squadron was on 8 February 1942 and his log book was endorsed with a recommendation written by Colin Gray.

To Malta

Jeff West, along with thirteen other experienced Spitfire pilots, assembled at Bush House in London in March 1942. They travelled to the seaplane base near Plymouth (Mount Battenhoven). The plan was that these pilots would familiarise themselves with Maltese airspace, in Hurricanes, in preparation for the air-delivery of their Spitfires.

'Malta was no picnic - it wasn't fun in any shape or form.'

'The first Spitfires delivered to Malta were thirteen Mk VBs, flown from the Royal Navy Aircraft Carrier HMS *Eagle*. With that first group was Phil Hepple who had avoided a court marshal, for the unauthorised low flying incident, by volunteering to serve in Malta. He was a great friend. I was very fond of 'Nip'. First to land was Stan Grant, later to be Squadron Leader Grant and command our Squadron. 'Nip' landed second.'

Half an hour after the Spitfires landed Stan Turner, who also arrived in the Sunderland, organised himself and West to fly display sorties over the islands so that the anti-aircraft gunners could familiarise themselves with the shape of a Spitfire. Next day, the newspaper reported...

"Spring is in the air,
the Spitfires are here."

and

"While the daredevils were showing off their prowess,
the Hurricanes were up in the sun,
fighting the Hun."

Over the months, more Spitfires were delivered and heavy air fighting continued through the summer. Malta was the lowest ebb of the war for Jeff West. 'I never thought I would survive 1942. However, there

Above and facing page: This Spitfire Mk VB EP312 was the personal mount of Wing Commander Dereck (Bill) Kain and was photographed here at Ed Ku, Egypt in May 1944 At this time Kain's job was to keep an overview watch on the serviceability of North African fighter airfields. During an interview with Kerry Carlyle in 1996 Bill Kain related an incident where he flew into an isolated, un-manned, strip to check its condition, only to be greeted by the site of an unknown B-17 with no squadron or theatre markings. American soldiers guarding the B-17 made it clear that its passengers were *very* important visitors and 'we are on the same side – but you should leave right now'. (D. Kain via K. Carlyle)

was a great spirit on the island, even though the food was poor and there were attacks of dysentery, which we called "Malta Dog." The dysentery was quite debilitating to fly with!

The supply situation was so desperate at times, that fuel and ammunition were brought in by submarine.'

New Tactics over Malta

'When Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park and Lord Gort arrived, things were reorganised. Prior to them, while I was there, things (regarding air tactics) were a shambles. One of Park's changes was to try and attack raids before they reached Malta, which was all very well, if you had effective air-sea rescue – which we did not. While I was there, I didn't like to be out of sight of land for that very reason.

There was nowhere really to land on Malta except the airfields because of the way farm fields were divided up with stone walls. There was one occasion when a Canadian pilot named Latimer, and I were out for a walk (on a day off) when we saw a Spitfire being harried by a 109. It turned towards Takali airfield down below us and looked as though it would make it. Two more 109's appeared and he turned away from the airfield towards us.'

West and Latimer were exploring a small valley above Takali. Badly damaged, but still under control, the Spitfire flew up the valley and crashed fifty metres from where the two were, and adjacent to an anti-aircraft gun emplacement.

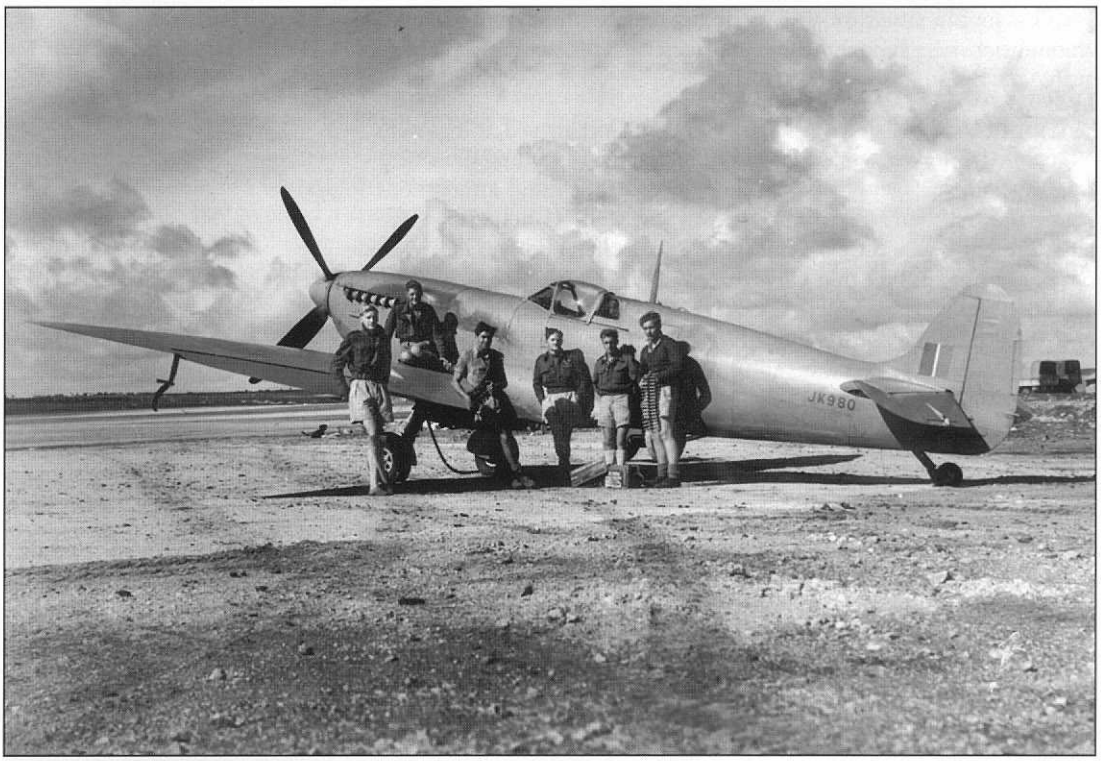
Squadron Leader Jeff West in the cockpit of a Spitfire Mk IX refined for the high-altitude interception role, Egypt 1944. (J. West)

'I ran towards the crash, jumping over a couple of stone fences and when I arrived the army gunners were trying to pull the pilot from his burning cockpit. They had the canopy slid back but the pilot was still strapped into his Sutton harness. I pushed them out of the way, dropped the cockpit door and pulled the release pin on his harness and got his shoulders out of the plane. A couple of 109's gave us a "squirt" while we were trying to pull him clear.

Medics arrived and put him on a stretcher. A shin-bone was sticking out where a cannon shell had got him, his Mae West (life jacket) was smouldering, his broken ribs were sticking out and he looked up at me and coughed his blood all over me, his eyes rolled up. A later report said that he died in hospital but I'm sure he died in my hands. He was a Norwegian boy; it's not very nice...'

On another occasion, Jeff West witnessed a pair of 109's shoot down a Spitfire and the pilot successfully bail out. 'They did not shoot him in his parachute but flew close over the top of the 'chute' causing it to collapse. He fell onto rocks and was killed. He was buried wrapped in a

Spitfire Mk IXc EN399, in an unpainted state at Aboukir, Egypt, 1944. After some success with modifying Spitfire Mk Vs to intercept high-flying Luftwaffe Ju 86P reconnaissance aircraft, the RAF worked with Mk IXs. By 1944, when this photograph and the one below were taken, the threat had largely receded. (J. West)



A lightened and finely-tuned Spitfire F Mk IXc rebuilt by the RAF maintenance unit at Aboukir, Egypt, 1944. Squadron Leader Jeff West, centre, was a test and development pilot on the high-altitude interceptor development team. (J. West)

blanket, as we had no coffins. At the ceremony the wrapped body was placed on a stretcher and with pallbearers holding it up, a union jack was draped over it to make it look as though the body was on a raised box. Photos were taken to send to his family. "Don't you send photos like this to my family if I'm killed!" I thought.'

Dereck 'Bill' Kain

'At one stage we had a visit from Lord Tedder during a raid and he was up on the parapet of our hotel, which overlooked our airfield. Some 109's swept past below us doing slow rolls. Tedder, moved to anger, said that he must get us reinforcements, but the best that could be arranged was a squadron of Hurricanes from North Africa.'

This was 229 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Dereck 'Bill' Kain. They arrived in two flights, on 27 March 1942. Jeff West flew two sorties that day as escort for the incoming Hurricanes. They were in action immediately and scored their first victory on 1 April. However, the Hurricanes suffered several losses on the ground and 229 Squadron was temporarily disbanded, on 29 April 1942.

The author's interview with Jeff West concluded at this point with the intention that we would continue at a later date. With Jeff's untimely death on April 1998 that did not happen.

Following Jeff West's survival of the Malta campaign, his next major posting was with No.3 Maintenance Unit at Aboukir, where he was involved with the development of Mk IX Spitfires as high-altitude interceptors. A number of Mk IXs were lightened and refined for the role, with Squadron Leader Jeff West and his team acting as test pilots.

Dereck (Bill) Kain, about 1940. (D. Kain via K. Carlyle)

Another job assigned to Wing Commander Dereck Kain was liaising with the Egyptian Air Force and handing over a squadron of Hawker Hurricanes in 1944. This photo was taken at Ed Ku in Egypt, on the day of hand-over. (D. Kain via K. Carlyle)

Wing Commander Warren Schrader DFC & Bar

Warren Schrader's older brother Gordon joined the RAF on a Short Service Commission in 1936. His letters home about Air Force life influenced Warren to join the RNZAF when war broke out, in 1939. He was initially rejected on medical grounds, being told that he had a hole in the wall to his abdominal cavity. This was surgically repaired and he spent many hours in a gym regaining his strength. Warren Schrader was accepted for training in March 1941.

On his initial training course at Harewood, he proved quite good at instrument flying in the Link Trainer. This resulted in him being selected for training as a bomber pilot – but, like so many others, his mind was set on fighters.

'When volunteers were called for 18 pilots to go to Canada for training, this seemed the opportunity needed to get overseas as soon as possible.

I arrived in Canada and found myself posted to a Harvard OTU. This was fine by me, but typical of the Air Force, in that I had started training in one direction – bombers – but was now plucked out of that course and switched to another – fighters. From Canada, I was shipped to England and flew Miles Masters as a refresher and was then posted to a Hurricane OTU. The Hurricane was a most enjoyable and very fine aircraft to fly.'

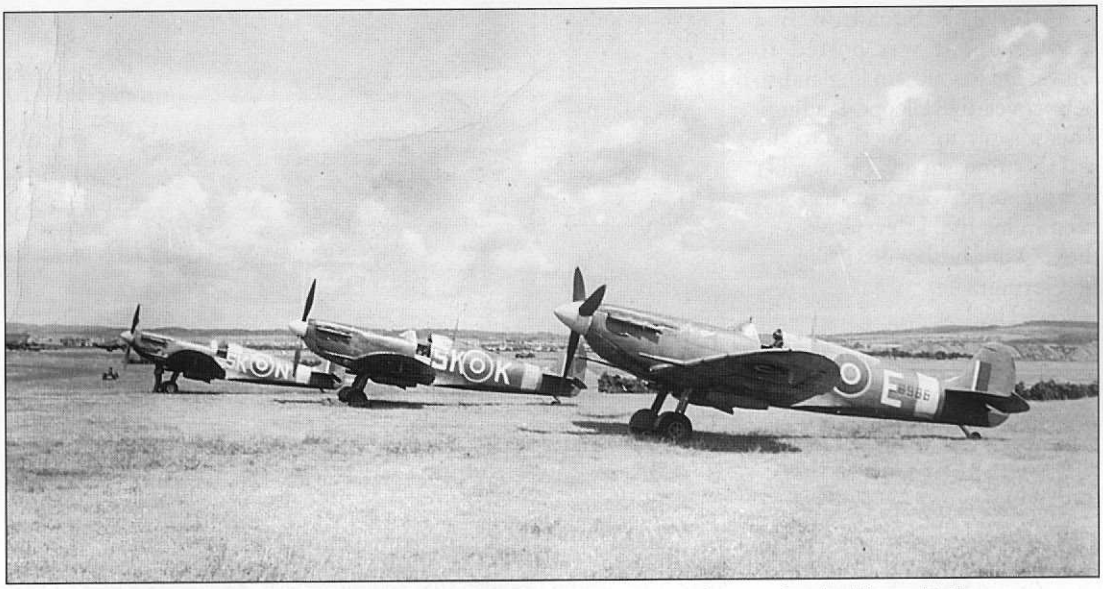
Taken at Brindisi in December 1943. Left to right, Pilot Officer Len 'Hap' Harrison, Squadron Leader H.R. 'Dick' Webb and Flight Lieutenant Warren Schrader. The 1435 Squadron Spitfire Mk IX they are standing with is coded 'V-A' with 'V' being the Squadrons code letter and 'A' the individual aircraft. The Spitfire in the background, coded 'AX' is from 1 Squadron SAAF.

In this photo, the Mae West life jacket Schrader is wearing shows the oil stains received while flying a captured Macchi M.C.202 in Malta. 'On 24 September 1943 I flew a captured M.C.202 from Sicily to Malta and Dick Webb flew with me in an Me 109. On 3 October I decided to take a second flight in the Macchi, however after take off, an oil pipe burst and the cockpit filled with a fine spray of oil, some of which ended up on the Mae West. This occurred just after take off but, fortunately, I was able to do a short circuit and land. Needless to say that was my last flight in the Macchi – I felt suitably discouraged!' (W. Schrader)

Spitfires

'From there I was posted to my first operational squadron, No. 165, newly formed at Ayr, Scotland. I arrived late at night and reported to all the right people the next morning, including my flight commander. We had a short chat and a corporal was detailed to fuel a Spitfire.' *Schrader had never flown a Spitfire at this stage*. 'Suddenly the flight commander looked at his watch and said "Good heavens is that the time? Must pop up to the Mess for morning tea." So he left saying I had better do a few circuits and get some air experience and that the Corporal would show me what all the knobs did – off he walked!

That was my conversion to the Spitfire. However it was a marvellous aeroplane to fly, and I enjoyed a first flight of over an hour.



Pilot Officer Warren E. Schrader flew Spitfire Mk VB AB986 'SH-E' on two sorties covering the Dieppe Raid on 19 August 1942. The squadron was based at Gravesend at the time. This was his first real taste of combat and Schrader flew as No.2 to 165 Squadron's C.O., Squadron Leader H.J.L. Hallows. Note the silver fern leaf symbol forward of the cockpit, one of the national emblems adopted by New Zealanders. (W. Schrader)

From the left, 'Hap' Harrison, Squadron Leader Webb and Warren Schrader, in front of a 1435 Spitfire Mk IX 'V–A', after a Walrus air-sea-rescue escort mission. Schrader shot down two Me 109s and Webb (NZ) and Flight Sergeant Pat Butler (UK), one each.

The photo was released to the press at the time, with the caption 'Four 109s in five minutes'. (W. Schrader)

After 165 Squadron had worked up, it was posted to Gravesend in southern England, to help cover the Dieppe landings. This was my introduction to the real shooting war and I remember being more nervous than I had ever been in my life. I flew as No.2 to the C.O. and he shot down a couple of German aeroplanes. I just followed looking round nervously the whole time. Apart from Dieppe we did convoy patrols and uneventful sweeps over Europe, France mainly.

Bombing his employer

'Before the war, I worked for the New Zealand branch of the Dutch owned Philips Electrical Company. One of my tasks was the completion of 'H' returns, which detailed the parts in stock for the radios etc. that the company sold. The returns were sent to Head Office in Einhoven, Holland, which was rather ironic in that we once covered a diversionary bombing

Another new Squadron forming at the same time as Schrader's was No.164. Squadrons forming in the north would work up on 'tired', old Spitfires, compared with what their front-line counterparts operated.

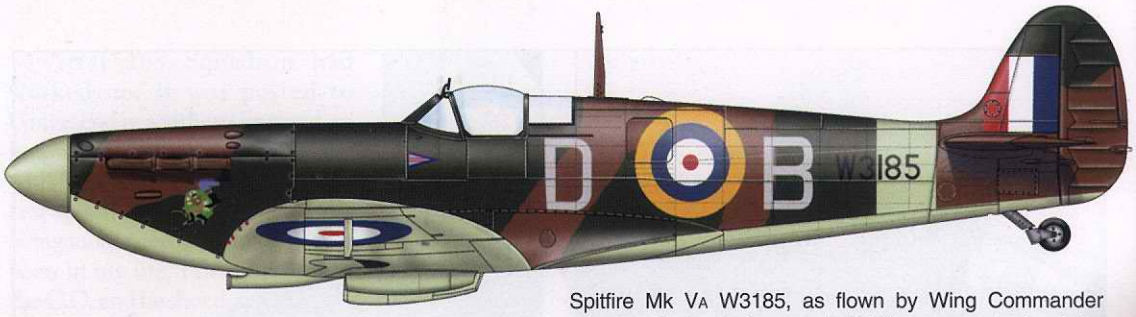
Spitfire Mk VA R7335 was with 164 Squadron at Skaebrae in the summer of 1942. It first flew on 11 March 1941 and served with 164 Squadron from 18 April 1942. It was later converted to PR XIII standard, in March 1943. This machine would have been manufactured with the *Dark Green* and *Dark Earth* Temperate Land scheme and appears to have only been partially repainted in the Day Fighter Scheme promulgated in August 1942.

Above: A group of 164 Squadron pilots pose with R7335, their Squadron Leader's aircraft.

A Sergeant Pilot poses beside the large personal marking on R7335. (D. Erskin)

Two photographs of 164 Squadron pilots Louie, on the left, and Derek Erskin with a Spitfire Mk VA, Skaebrae, summer 1942. This squadron was known as the 'Argentine British' squadron, with its aircraft paid for by Argentinians of British descent. (D. Erskin)

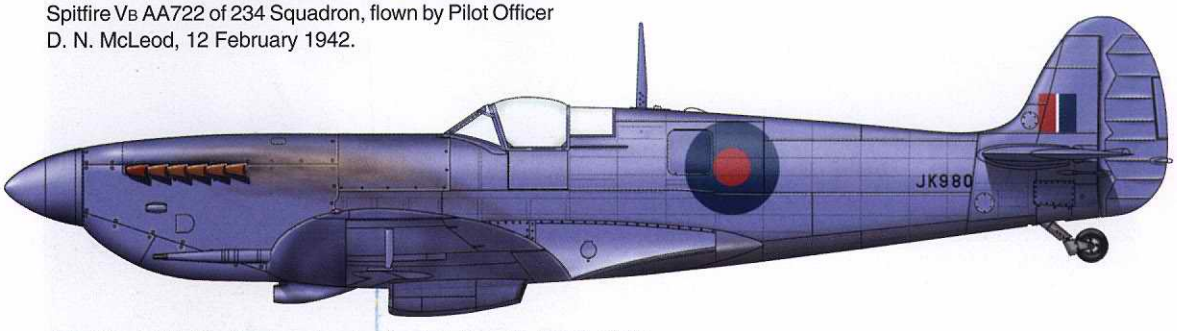
Derek Erskin poses on the rear fuselage of a 164 Squadron Spitfire Mk VA, at Skaebrae in the summer of 1942. Note how much lighter the fuselage band is, compared with the undersurface colour, and that it does not extend underneath the fuselage. (D. Erskin)



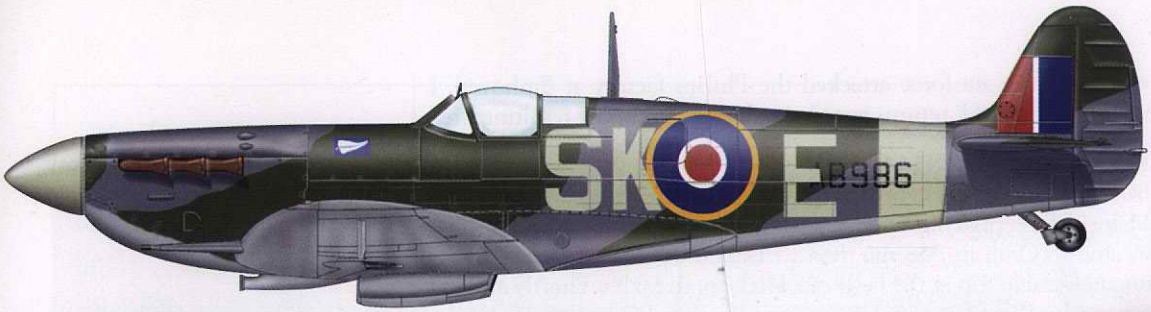
Spitfire Mk VA W3185, as flown by Wing Commander Douglas Bader, 9 August 1941. The green shade of the map of Europe, behind the 'kicking boot' emblem, and the position of 'Lord Lloyd 1' are provisional. Note the slightly non-standard camouflage pattern on the port side.

Spitfire Mk VA, R7335, of 164 Squadron, Skaebrae, summer, 1942. Note the mixture of Dark Green, Dark Earth and Ocean Grey in the upper surface camouflage.

Spitfire VB AA722 of 234 Squadron, flown by Pilot Officer D. N. McLeod, 12 February 1942.

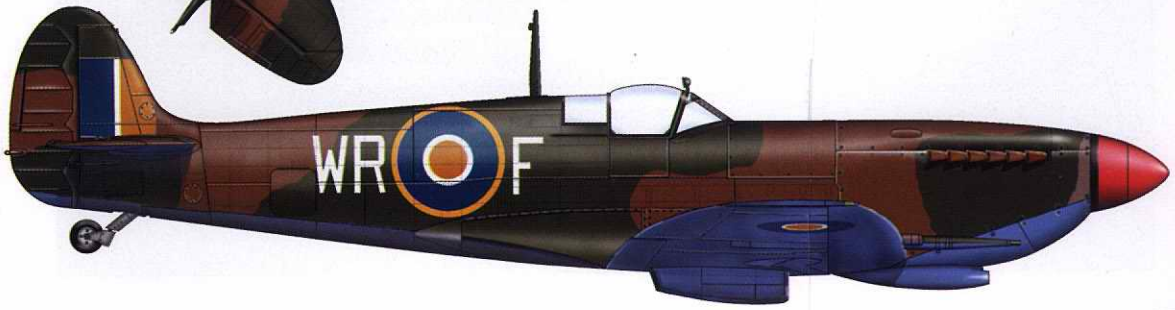


A Spitfire F Mk IXC, lightened and refined at Aboukir, Egypt, 1944.



Pilot Officer Warren E. Schrader flew Spitfire Mk VB AB986, covering the Dieppe raid, 19 August 1942.

A 40 Squadron South African Air Force Spitfire LF Mk IX fitted with a laterally mounted fuselage camera for the tactical reconnaissance role. Colour scheme is the Temperate Land Scheme of *Dark Green* and *Dark Earth* with *Azure Blue* lower surfaces left from when it wore a Desert Scheme.



raid while a main force attacked the Philips factory at Einhoven. I wondered if my 'H' returns were being burned up in the resulting fire.'

The Mediterranean

In December 1942, Flight Lieutenant Warren Schrader was posted to Malta as a potential flight commander with 1435 Squadron. He travelled by ship to Oran in Algeria, then by Dakota to Tunis followed by an uncomfortable trip in the belly of a Hudson, to Malta. Shortly after he arrived, his flight commander was posted back to England and Schrader took over 'A' Flight. From Malta, the squadron flew frequent missions over Sicily, mainly dive bombing Luftwaffe airfields.

One of the flight commanders with 1435 Squadron in Malta was Englishman Philip 'Nip' Hepple. He was a tall, fair-haired languid individual, who smoked cigarettes through a cigarette holder. When I first met him I wondered what I'd struck. However, I later found out that he was what the RAF called a very 'press on' type. One evening in the Mess he asked if anyone was interested in going over to Sicily with him, the next morning. There was a notable silence from the others who knew him. However, I being the new boy agreed to go, and so early next morning we headed off over Sicily arriving at first light. We flew around at low level attacking anything that moved and being shot at in return.

Arriving home after being hit by a 20mm cannon shell, 'Nip' taxied in and we could see a hole in the side of his aircraft, with a stream of blood coming from it. His very concerned ground crew – who worshipped him – leapt onto the wing asking if he was all right. It was obvious that he was very weak from the loss of blood, but he said, 'yes I'm all right but I think I've been shot in the bottom!' I realised that there was more to 'Nip' Hepple than I originally thought – not long after this, he left the Island because of his injuries.

A bomb-laden Spitfire Mk Vc on a Maltese airfield, 1943. Note the blast pen built from earth filled fuel cans. (W. Schrader)

While on Malta in 1943, we were visited by General Alexander. While he was inspecting us he asked me my opinion regarding the award of the Victoria Cross to Lieutenant Ngarimu (of the famous 28th Battalion, 2NZEF) and how that would be viewed by the Māori people. I think I probably stammered a bit and said I thought the Māori people would feel very honoured by this and it would help recruiting.

We advanced from Malta to Sicily and then to the Italian mainland. During this period we using 250 lb 'daisy cutter' bombs which had 30" extensions to their detonator noses. This caused them to explode above the ground, causing maximum damage to aircraft, vehicles and, of course, people.

In October 1943 we moved forward to Brindisi, on Italy's south-east coast, where 1435 Squadron flew air-support missions for Tito's Partisans, across the Adriatic, in Yugoslavia.

Also operating in Italy throughout that campaign were several South African Air Force (SAAF) Spitfire squadrons.

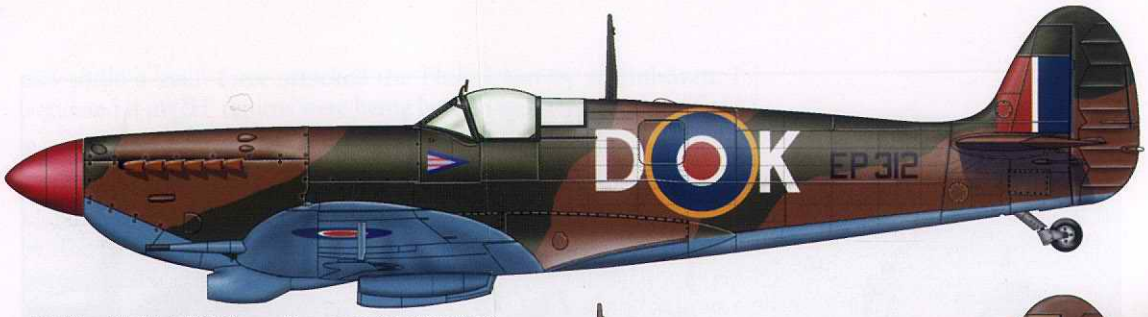
Here, Captain F. de Wet poses with his No. 1 Squadron Spitfire Mk IX PL2?? probably at Risano, in northern Italy, at the end of the war. This machine is in the Day Fighter scheme of *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey* with *Medium Sea Grey* lower surfaces. Spinner is red, codes are white and the rear fuselage band is *Sky.*

Note that SAAF Squadrons generally repainted the *Dull Red* parts of the RAF roundel and fin flash orange. (F. de Wet via C. Hugo)

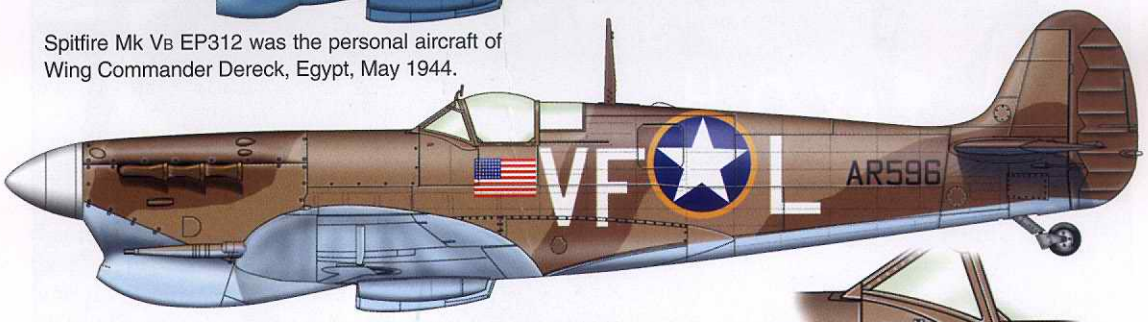
Early 'G' suit

Schrader recalls. 'On Malta we were visited by an RAF Squadron Leader who was a medical officer and pilot. He was testing a new anti-gravity or 'G' suit for fighter pilots. It consisted of a garment rather like fishing waders coming up to the chest, with pockets behind the knees and against the abdomen which were filled with water. The idea being that under 'G' forces this water would sink down and press against the blood vessels in such a way as to stop blood leaving the pilots brain, and him blacking out. I was chosen to test this thing and well remember the 15 minutes it took to strap and zip me into it. This was followed by pouring cold water into the suit pockets which caused me to need to go to the toilet. I had to take off the suit which took another 15 minutes, answer natures call, and then don it again. I tested the 'G' suit by diving and then pulling out sharply – the suit did indeed work, to some extent.'

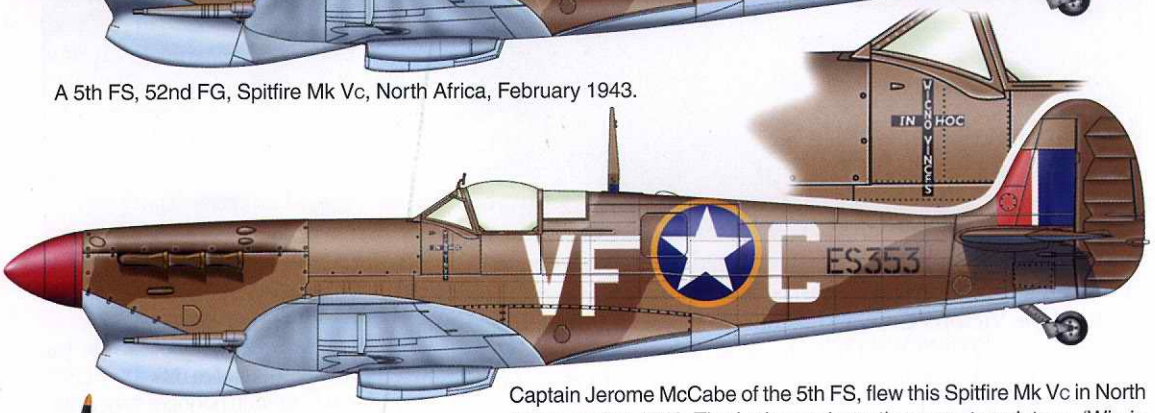
On 18 April 1945, when Schrader was leading 486 (NZ) Squadron, the same medical officer, now a Group Captain, visited them in a Spitfire Mk IX with an improved 'G' suit. This one was much improved and operated pneumatically. Warren Schrader tested this suit and reported that it worked well. This later suit may be considered the prototype for modern 'G' suits.



Spitfire Mk VB EP312 was the personal aircraft of Wing Commander Dereck, Egypt, May 1944.



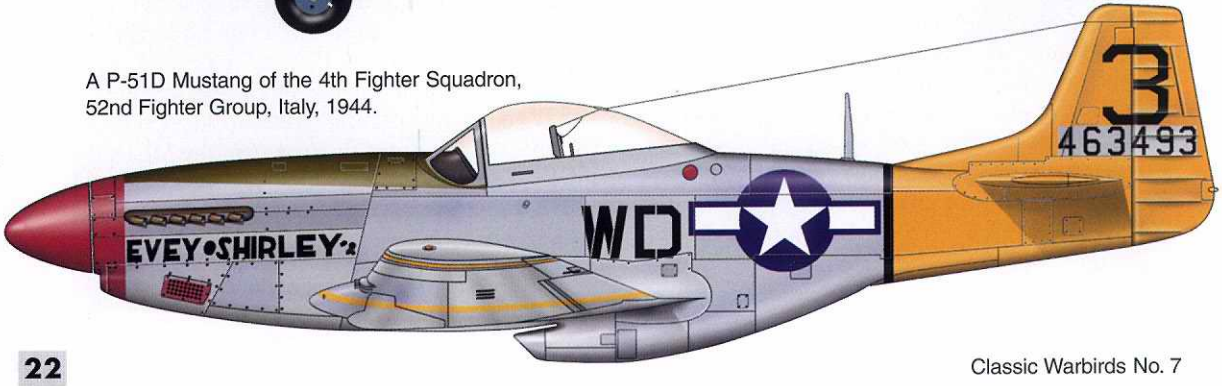
A 5th FS, 52nd FG, Spitfire Mk Vc, North Africa, February 1943.



Captain Jerome McCabe of the 5th FS, flew this Spitfire Mk Vc in North Africa, spring 1943. The Latin words on the cross translate as 'Win in this sign'. Photographs of ES353 appear in Classic Warbirds No.5.

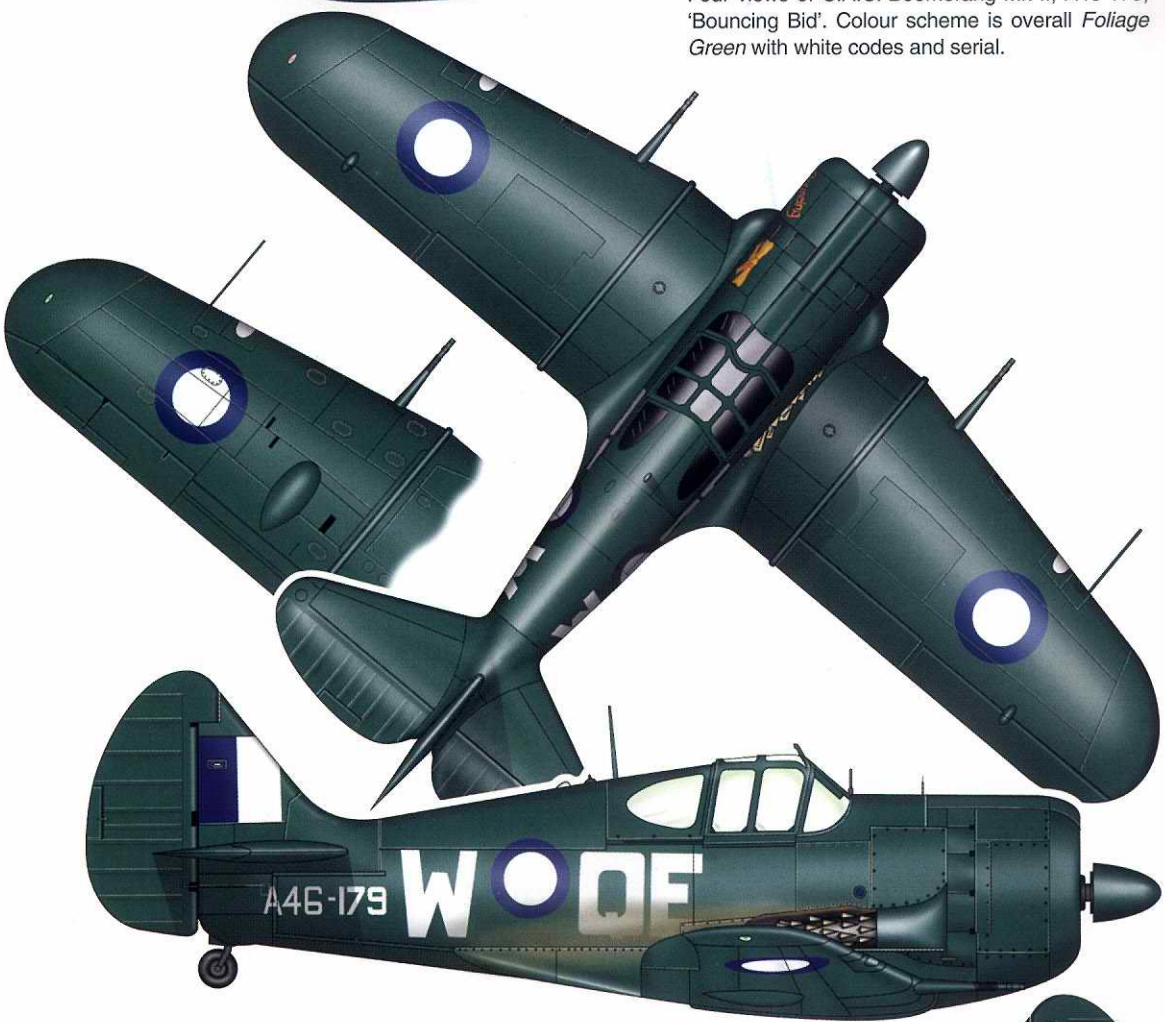
Spitfire PR Mk XI MB 955, 'Lease Fleece', of the 7th Photo Reconnaissance Group, June 1944.

A P-51D Mustang of the 4th Fighter Squadron, 52nd Fighter Group, Italy, 1944.



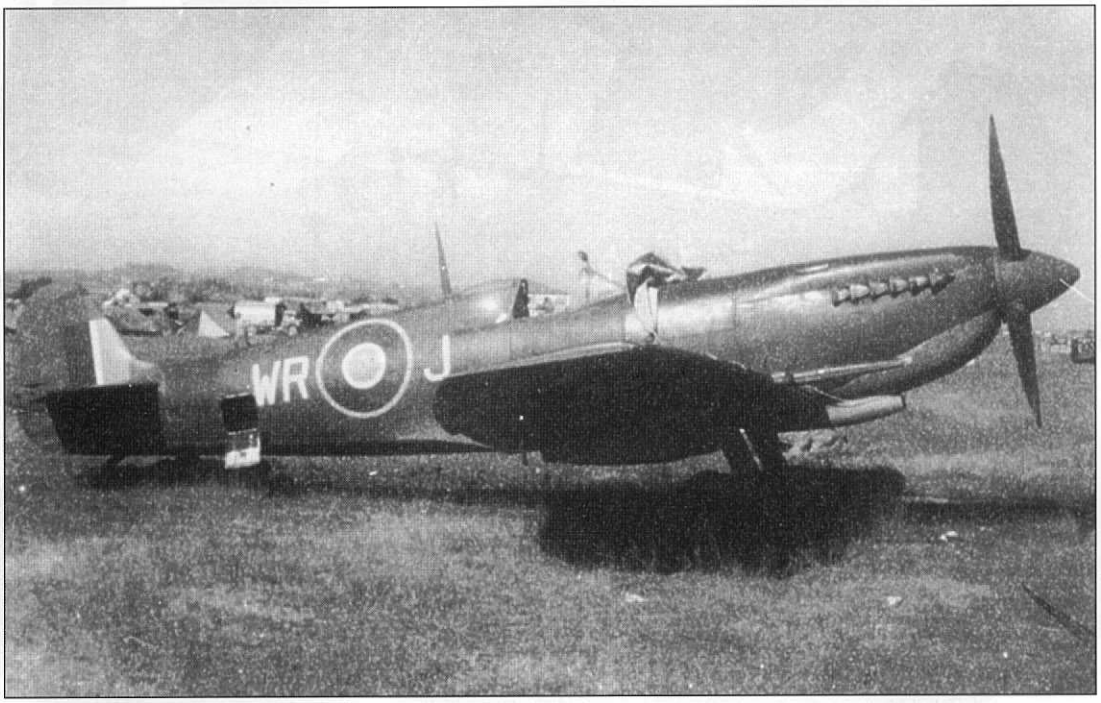
The Boomerang chapter starts on page 44.
The 'fall' of colour pages means these illustrations are separated from it.

Four views of C.A.C. Boomerang Mk II, A46-179, 'Bouncing Bid'. Colour scheme is overall *Foliage Green* with white codes and serial.



C.A.C. Boomerang Mk II A46-209, 'Bachelor Son' No.4 Squadron, August 1945.

Two pictures of 40 Squadron, 285 Wing, SAAF Spitfire LF Mk IXs, modified with laterally mounted fuselage cameras, for the tactical reconnaissance role. Both photos are at Forli in the winter of 1944/45, with ground water and mud obvious in the top photo. Near the end of the war when the squadron arrived at Risano, near Udine in northern Italy, the runway was so dusty that drastic measures were called for to clear it. With no suitable way of sweeping away the dust or dampening it, all 285 Wing's aircraft were parked in a line down the runway and, with every aircraft running its engine, the dust was blown clear. During this exercise Spitfire MK151 'WR-F' nosed over and damaged its propeller.* (via A. Yofe)



* Bouwer and Louw

The Balkan Air Force

No.1435 Squadron was now part of the Balkan Air Force with most of it's operations over Yugoslavia, flying air and ground attack missions against German transport, shipping, aerodromes and military installations.

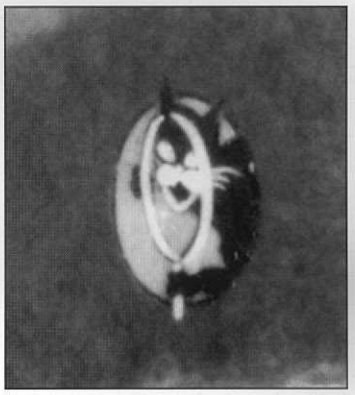
Combat victories

On 17 December 1943, Warren Schrader achieved his first aerial victories shooting down two Me 109s flying Spitfire Mk IX 'V-N'.

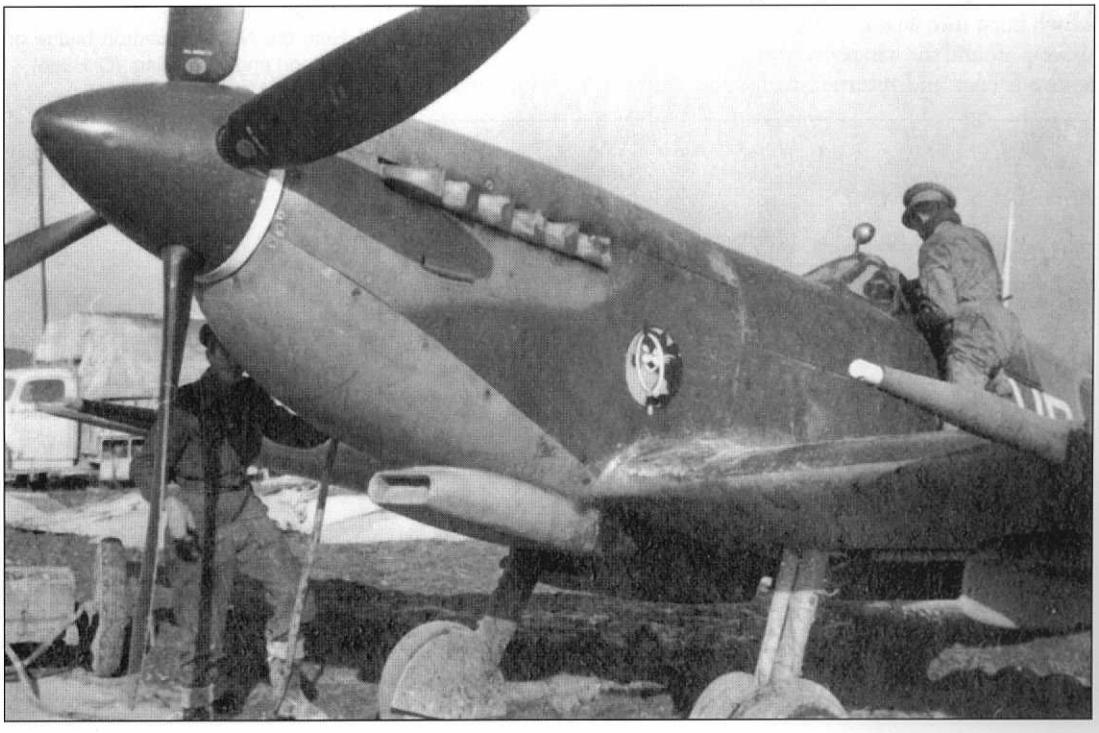
'One of our pilots had been shot down in the Adriatic just off the coast of Yugoslavia. A Walrus amphibian aircraft was assigned to pick up the downed pilot and we were sent to cover it in our Spitfire Mk IXs. Two Me 109s came in below us and I was able to shoot them both down. The first one just blew up with my first attack, but I had to pursue the other for some time. He was taking evasive action and, for some reason, eventually baled out. I don't know if the pilot was wounded, but his parachute opened prematurely, hit the tailplane and just streamed above him, not decelerating him much, as he fell straight down and hit the ground – this was, no doubt, fatal.

My second encounter with Me 109s happened on 3 January 1944. On this occasion, Warrant Officer Hoare flew as my No.2. We were scrambled to intercept two enemy aircraft which had come over on reconnaissance. They turned out to be Me 109s and we pursued them. In this combat I learned a valuable lesson. We went in to attack and I hadn't given Hoare any instructions as my No.2. I shot down the lead 109 and looked around to find Hoare still behind me with the other 109 escaping. From then on I always remembered to give my No.2 instructions to 'shoot at the other one', or something similar.

As I followed the first 109 down, I saw him streaming glycol and level out just above the sea, the canopy opened and it was obvious that he was about to ditch when Hoare went in and gave him a squirt and



A Spitfire F Mk IXc (modified for tactical reconnaissance duties) of No.40 Squadron in Italy, late December 1944. Most 40 Squadron Mk IXs were in the Temperate Land scheme with *Azure Blue* lower surfaces at this time. However this machine wears the *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey* Day Fighter scheme with *Medium Sea Grey* lower surfaces. Above is an enlargement of the Squadron's badge which depicts a cat looking through a magnifying glass. (via W. Matusiak)



claimed half the kill – this has rankled with me ever since (laughing).

On 20 January 1944, we attacked a German Radio Direction Finding (RDF) station on an island off the coast of Albania. We flew out at low level to avoid radar detection, climbed approaching the target and dived in to attack. As I dived away to the sea after my attack, there was a dreadful bang in the cockpit behind me and the rising smell of cordite in the cockpit. I was distinctly upset at the whole performance! When we landed, the squadron doctor took an interest and asked if I was suffering from shock or anything, which I wasn't. He went out to the damaged aeroplane and asked the ground crew to run a line through the bullet hole and extend its trajectory to see where it was heading. A 20mm cannon shell had hit the armour plate behind my seat splitting it and blowing a small hole, fortunately nothing came through. Had the round continued on its journey it would have gone through me into the instrument panel. The German 20mm cannon fires alternating rounds of armour-piercing and high-explosive and fortunately for me the round that hit my seat armour was high explosive, if it had been armour-piercing the result would have been rather unpleasant.

On 29 February 1944, we attacked a German E-boat off Corfu, which proved to be armed with a most unpleasant defence weapon – rockets which burst into a parachute, and trailed a cable and canister designed to wrap around the wing of your aircraft. We fired off all our ammunition at the E-boat and returned to base at Brindisi, to refuel and rearm.

A No.1 squadron SAAF Spitfire F Mk IXc, MH904 'AX-E' being refuelled at Foiano, Italy, about July 1944. At this time No.1 Squadron SAAF was part a SAAF Wing and under the command of Major J.E. Seccombe, a leading South African ace.*

This Spitfire is in the Day Fighter scheme of *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey* with *Medium Sea Grey* lower surfaces. Spinner is red, codes are white and the rear fuselage tail band is the standard Sky. Like other SAAF aircraft, the Red parts of the RAF roundel and fin flash were altered to orange.

Note the No. 1 Squadron badge on the port engine cowling. (C. Hugo)

Spitfire F Mk IX MA532 of No.1 Squadron South African Air Force. This tactical reconnoissance Spitfire has been repainted in the Temperate Land scheme of *Dark Green*, and *Dark Earth* with *Azure Blue* lower surfaces remaining from the previous Desert Scheme. Note the toned down rear fuselage band and the lightness of the roundel centre indicating that SAAF Orange has replaced the *Dull Red* parts of the national insignia. (C. Hugo)

* Bouwer and Louw

However, when we returned to the E-boat all we found was an oil slick and some wreckage. We claimed one E-boat destroyed.

On another occasion we were asked to report on the number and types of enemy aircraft at Valona, Albania. I decided the best way to do this was with a single low level pass, as was the rule with such targets. Invariably, the first pass woke up the airfield defences and there was no point in risking going back. I destroyed a Savoia Marchetti three engine transport plane on the ground.

Although I must admit that I found ground attack a most enjoyable and, shall we say, *stimulating* experience, it had its dangers and we suffered many casualties. On 19 March 1944, our C.O., Squadron Leader D.J. Clements, led a flight of four Spitfires (including Schrader in 'V-X' JL136) on a mission to Kotor, a narrow sea inlet on the coast of Yugoslavia.' Warren Schrader was the only pilot who returned. Clements was shot down and killed and at least one other survived, to become a P.O.W.

Clements had replaced Squadron Leader 'Dick' Webb in February, who had been promoted to lead a fighter wing in northern Italy. On a ground-attack sortie there he was injured by an exploding shell and lost the sight in one eye. Without his No.2 to escort him home that day, Webb would have been lost.'

German reconnaissance

'Our Squadron was engaged in chasing high altitude German reconnaissance planes which were sent over to photograph damage, caused by a German bombing raid on the port of Bari – a few ships were sunk. The squadron doctor (the same one who suggested I take up smoking for relaxation – which I never did, just to be contrary) was listening in to our radio conversations which consisted of little more that a dreadful sort of grunting which is all that you can manage in the cold at 40,000 ft

Also operating in Italy in the summer of 1944 were these Mustangs of the 4th Fighter Squadron, 52nd Fighter Group, of the USAAF's 15th Air Force. The Group converted from Spitfires to Mustangs in April 1944. This line-up shows their Mustangs with all-yellow tails. An interesting point is that 4th FS codes utilized either letters or numbers on the tails. Pierced-steel-planking (PSP) made for an adequate ramp area in sometimes muddy Italian conditions. (P. Ludwig)

with oxygen, but no pressure cabin. He told us afterwards that 'none of you blokes will live past middle age'; I've often wondered if he is still alive because I am.

On one of these high altitude interceptions I was flying as Dick Webb's No. 2. We caught up with the German Ju 86P and Dick said to release our 30 gallon drop tanks. His released but mine was frozen in place so, I ended up having a grandstand view of him shooting down this enemy aircraft, which was a bit frustrating for me.'

Instructing in Egypt

Warren Schrader completed his tour of duty with 1435 Squadron and was posted, as an instructor, to 71 OTU, Ismailia, Egypt on 10 June 1944. He was put in charge of a flight which taught aerial gunnery and dive-bombing. Schrader himself had received very little instruction in the finer points of air combat simply because, at his Hurricane equipped OTU, the weather was frequently bad and he missed out on these valuable lessons! 'I did so much aerial gunnery practice as an instructor that I feel this was a major reason for my success in later combat tours, back in Europe.

While instructing at Ismailia I was struck by the variety of nationalities attending; Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, South Africans, English and Rhodesians. We even had two black American pilots, on the same course as me, before I started instructing. We also had two Turks, even though Turkey was neutral in the War. Turkey had acquired British and German aircraft and, through some political manoeuvring, was able to send pilots and other aircrew to Ismailia, for operational training.'

Back in England in February 1945, Warren Schrader converted to Hawker Typhoons and then Tempests. In March he was posted to 486 (NZ) Squadron, which was then operating in Holland. This later part of Warren Schrader's career is covered in Classic Warbirds No. 5.

The Hawker Tempest Mk V flown by Squadron Leader Warren Schrader in April, 1945. Colour illustrations of this machine appear in Classic Warbirds No.5. (N. Schrader)

Lieutenant Colonel A.P. Clarke's Spitfire Mk V, BL964 is seen hear being inspected by German soldiers after he was shot down over France. It wears the squadron codes of 412 (Canadian) Squadron. According to its Movement Card, BL964 was with High Ercall Station Flight and was listed as missing on 26 July 1942. It was struck off charge – from the 309th FS USAAF – on 31 July 1942
(W. Matusiak)

Two of the most popular books in the Classic Warbirds series have been American Spitfire Camouflage and Markings, Parts 1 and 2. Some of the pictures published here have come to hand as a result of those books.

Colonel Clarke

On 26 July 1942 Lieutenant Colonel A.P. Clarke became the 31st Fighter Group's first combat casualty. Clarke failed to return from his second or third combat mission over occupied Europe, having flown as a guest with 412 (Canadian) Squadron. It seems that BL964 was transferred to the American 31st Fighter Group after its loss, for administrative purposes.

In his book 'Fighter Command Losses', Norman Franks lists EN784 beside Clarke's name, for 26 July 1942, but according to Wojtek Matusiak's records EN784 was in service with 317 (Polish) Squadron from October 1942 until June 1943. According to its Movement Card, EN784 was

Spitfire Mk VB's of the 2nd Fighter Squadron, 52nd Fighter Group, USAAF, in England, late summer 1942.
The 2nd FS had been working-up in Northern Ireland and moved to RAF Maydown on 7 August. From there it moved to Biggin Hill and, on 7 September, it flew its first mission over France.
These Spitfires are in the standard Day Fighter camouflage scheme, but appear to have black spinners which was not the norm. Second in line is 'QP-J' BM479. (S. Wandzilaka via W. Matusiak)

An excellent top view of a 2nd FS 52nd FG Spitfire Mk Vc taken at Bocca di Falco airfield near Palermo, Sicily. The 2nd FS flew their Spitfires in, on 30 July 1943, with the ground crews following a short time later. Revetments with protective concrete barriers were a luxury seldom experienced by the 52nd FG. These ones are probably German-made. Note the remnants of the serial EP813 or ER815 stencilled on the port tailplane. A side view of this Spitfire Mk Vc appears on page 24 of Classic Warbirds No. 4. (Via P. Ludwig)

lost in the Channel on 27 July 1943, exactly one year after Clarke's demise, when Squadron Leader G C Keefer, of 412 Squadron, baled out of it during a Ramrod mission. 'Fighter Command Losses' does list this loss, but with the note 'serial number unknown'. On the same page it has a photo of Keefer with an incorrect date given for the date he was shot down.

The Mediterranean

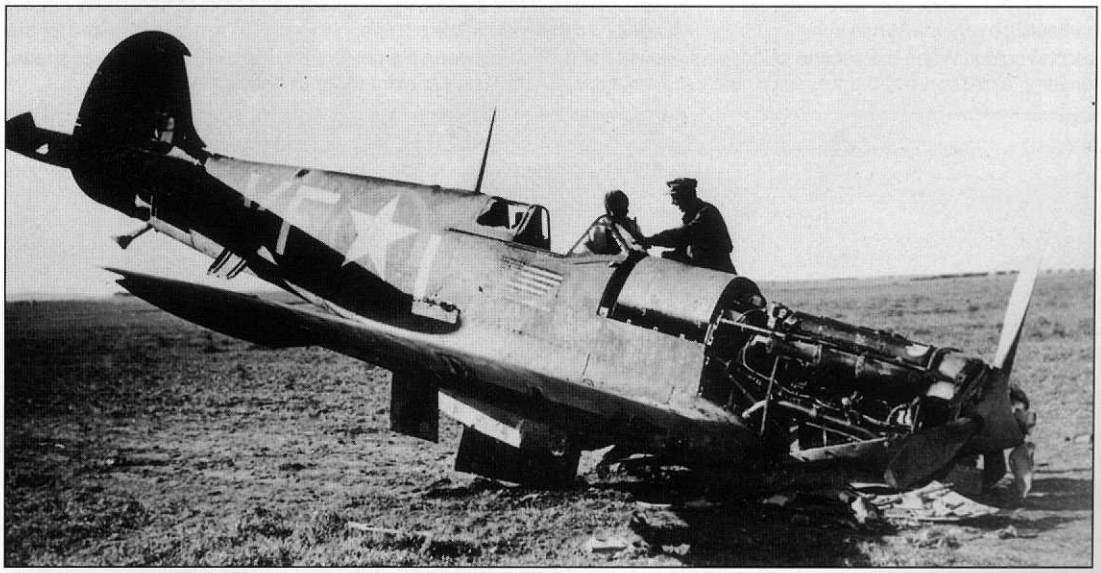
From November 1942, American Spitfires also appeared in the Mediterranean, with the 31st and 52nd Fighter Groups arriving as part of Operation Torch.

As an additional recognition marking for the benefit of the Moroccan and Algerian population, a temporary American flag decal was applied on both sides of the fuselage near the cockpit. This is still evident in the photograph below.

On 9 July 1943, the Allies invaded Sicily with Palermo being taken by ground troops on 23 July. The 31st and 52nd Fighter Groups were still equipped with Spitfires at that time. The two Groups moving from North Africa, via Malta/Gozo into Sicily and then the Italian mainland.

In American Spitfire Camouflage and Markings, Part 2, we did not have enough room to publish all the photographs and colour schemes we would have liked and a colour illustrations of Spitfire PR Mk XI 'Lease Fleece' appears on page 22 of this book.

When the 31st FG and 52nd FG converted to P-51 Mustangs their surviving Spitfires were passed to RAF units and other allies. On page 33 is a spectacular photograph of two Spitfires from a batch of Mk Vs taken over by the French in about May, 1944.

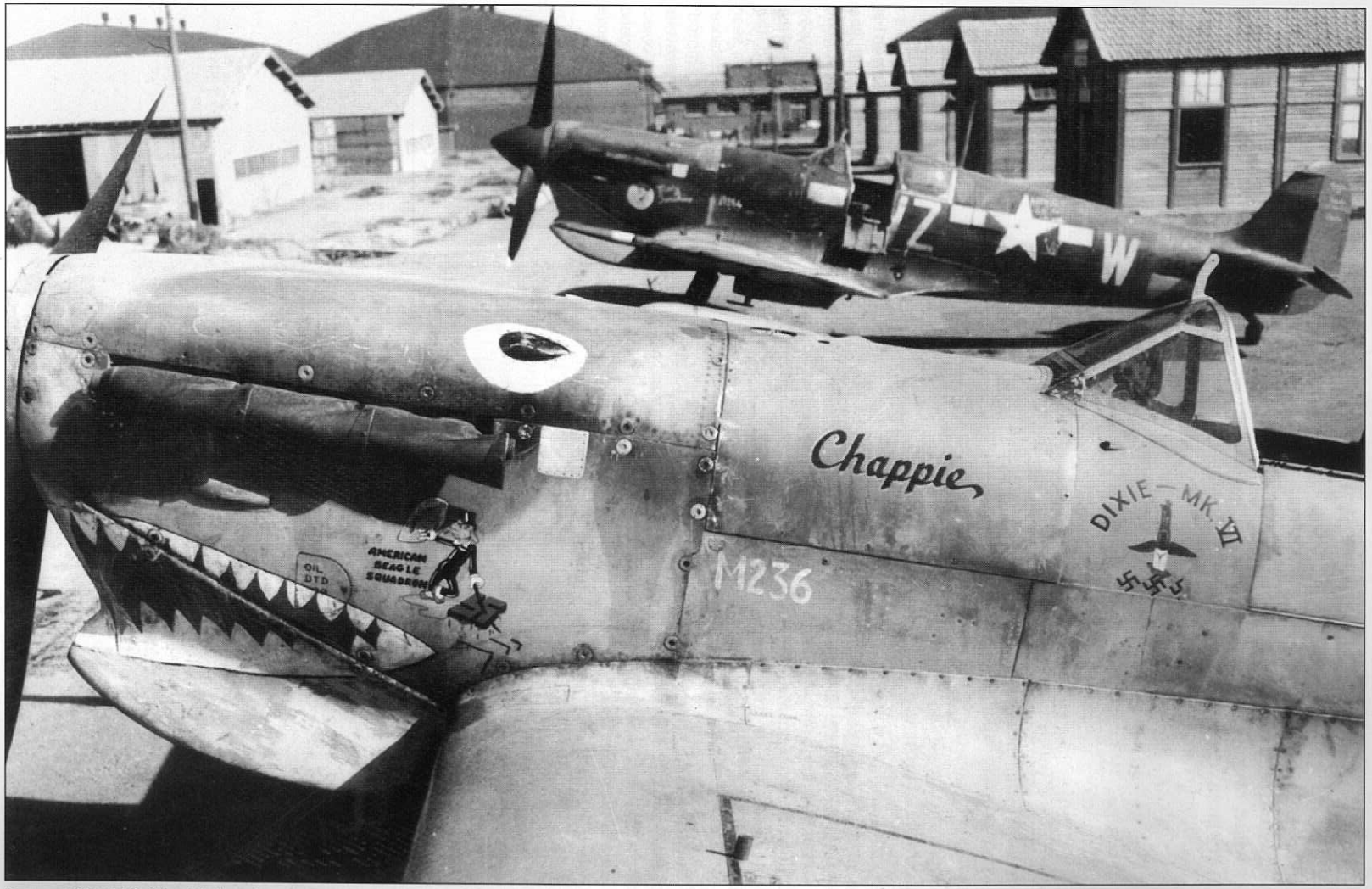


Italian soldiers inspect a shot-down 5th FS, 52nd FG Spitfire. On the back of the original print is the date 16 February 1943, and a caption indicating it was shot down by Italians. It's serial begins with either 'AR5' or 'AB5'.

This Spitfire's camouflage scheme is the RAF Desert Scheme of *Dark Earth* and *Mid-Stone* with *Azure Blue* undersurfaces. The original RAF roundels have been modified to USAAF cocardes, white code letters applied and the RAF fin flashes painted over. Upperwing cocardes are probably 45" diameter and without an outer yellow ring. Fuselage cocardes are modified from the previous RAF 36" type 'C1' roundels and the underwing 32" type 'C' roundels also modified to cocardes. Spinners on 52nd FG aircraft in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations were specified as white at this time.
(W. Matusiak)

Captain Robert (Bob) Dixon about to enter 'Hope', one of the Spitfire Mk Vs used by the 7th PG for training in 1943. Note the later round-style rear view mirror and the obvious overlap effect created in the application of this Spitfire's Day Fighter camouflage scheme. When spraying on the first colour, efforts were made not to apply too much to areas intended for the second colour. When the second colour was applied the overlap between the colours often showed as a darker shade. Avoiding excessive overlap was important because extra paint resulted in extra weight. (Adams via P. Ludwig)

Spitfire PR Mk XI MB 955, 'Lease Fleece', carrying full D-Day stripes.
PA 841 'Kisty the Ist' is in the background. (P. Ludwig)



Two ex-USAAF Spitfire Mk Vs taken over by France. The one in the foreground is from the 2nd FS, 52nd FG and the other was previously with the 309th FS, 31st FG. The number M236 is French applied and probably an administrative aid, to help decide which aircraft to rebuild and which to cannibalise for parts. (W. Matusiak)

Pacific Surrender Schemes

With the sudden end to hostilities in the Pacific, came Allied directives prescribing that the Japanese were to paint surrendered aircraft white, overall. Markings were to be a green cross on a white background, painted in place of the red hinomaru. As the accompanying photographs illustrate, they sometimes deviated significantly from the officially specified surrender scheme. Such a scheme was important to identify Japanese aircraft flown by Japanese crew on authorised transport duties and those bringing Japanese surrender delegations into the various Allied operational headquarters.

Wing Commander Bill Kofoed landing the captured Zero, later serialled NZ6000, at Piva airstrip. He made the 32 minute flight to Piva, with the undercarriage down, without incident. The appearance of the aircraft caused quite a stir, as by this late stage of the war few personnel among the thousands at the base had ever seen a Japanese aircraft, even at a distance. No later flights were attempted, although the engine was run up several times. The Zero was simply an object of curiosity, as the base was wound down and personnel prepared to move out. (L. Mitchell)

This and following pages: Four pictures of the RNZAF's captured Mitsubishi Type 22 Zero being serviced on Bougainville, before being shipped to New Zealand. (A. Galbraith)

For the RAAF in the New Guinea and Netherlands East Indies area, this meant Labuan Island, off the coast of British North Borneo. Labuan had been occupied by the RAAF since 10 June 1945 and, although most Japanese aircraft had been withdrawn by August 1944 to defend the Philippines, a few remained in the area to appear in surrender schemes. They included such Japanese Army Air Force types as; Tachikawa's Ki.36 'Ida' & Ki.43 'Hickory' and Mitsubishi's Ki.51 'Sonia' & Ki.21 'Sally'.

While the RAAF acquired various surrendered aircraft at its bases north of Australia, the RNZAF obtained some – mainly Japanese Navy aircraft – from surrendered Japanese forces in the Solomon Island chain, north east of New Guinea.

Apart from occasional floatplane courier flights from Rabaul, no Japanese aircraft had been sighted near the island since March 1944. However, a few days after the war ended, RNZAF intelligence learned of an airworthy Zero, located at Kara airstrip in southern Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands operational area. RNZAF personnel visited the strip on 14 September and found that the aircraft existed and was serviceable, this being demonstrated by Japanese engineers running up its engine for the New Zealanders.

The aircraft had been caught on the ground by Allied bombers, during the American landings at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville, in November 1943. Serious damage had prevented the Zero being flown out to Rabaul and it had been hidden at Kara airstrip since that time. The Japanese decided to make the Zero airworthy as a morale boosting exercise. With over 60 technical personnel available and a variety of other Zero

airframes for parts, the machine was soon in flying order, utilising the front half of airframe No.3835 and the rear of No.3844. Petty Officer Sekizen Shibayama was flown from Rabaul to Bougainville at the end of July 1945 in a 'Jake' floatplane, to fly the Zero back to Rabaul. However, the tide of war caught up with this programme and the Zero stayed on the ground.

The RNZAF's captured A6M3 Type 22 Zero on Bougainville. Note the unique retention of a dark nose area as a kind of anti-glare panel. (A. Galbraith)

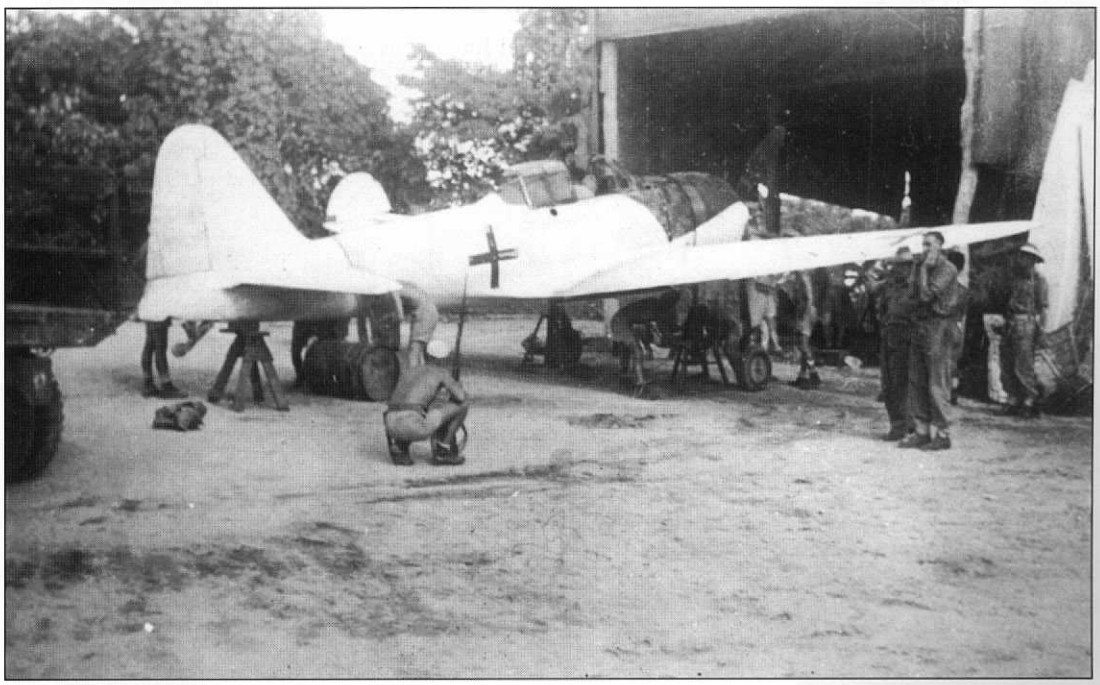
The Zero flies

Wing Commander Bill Kofoed decided that he wished to see and hopefully fly the infamous Zero. Therefore, on the morning of 15 September, he and Engineer Officer C.D. Kingsford flew in a Wirraway (of No. 5 Sqn. RAAF) to Kara airstrip. Kofoed and Kingsford inspected the aircraft and the Japanese pilot answered their queries, as best he could. All equipment seemed to be well built and working. On the strength of this opinion and his own impressions, Kofoed decided to fly it northwest to the RNZAF Field Headquarters at Piva, Bougainville.

Air Commodore G.N. Roberts, AOC New Zealand Air Task Force, was among those to inspect the aircraft back at Piva. Although no later flights were attempted at Piva, the engine was run up several times.

This Zero was not the only Japanese aircraft acquired by the RNZAF, with others being; three A6M5 Type 52 Zeros, a Mitsubishi Ki.46 and an Aichi E13A1 'Jake' floatplane.

A starboard side photo of the Zero on Bougainville. This photo shows its neat application of the white surrender scheme. (A. Galbraith)

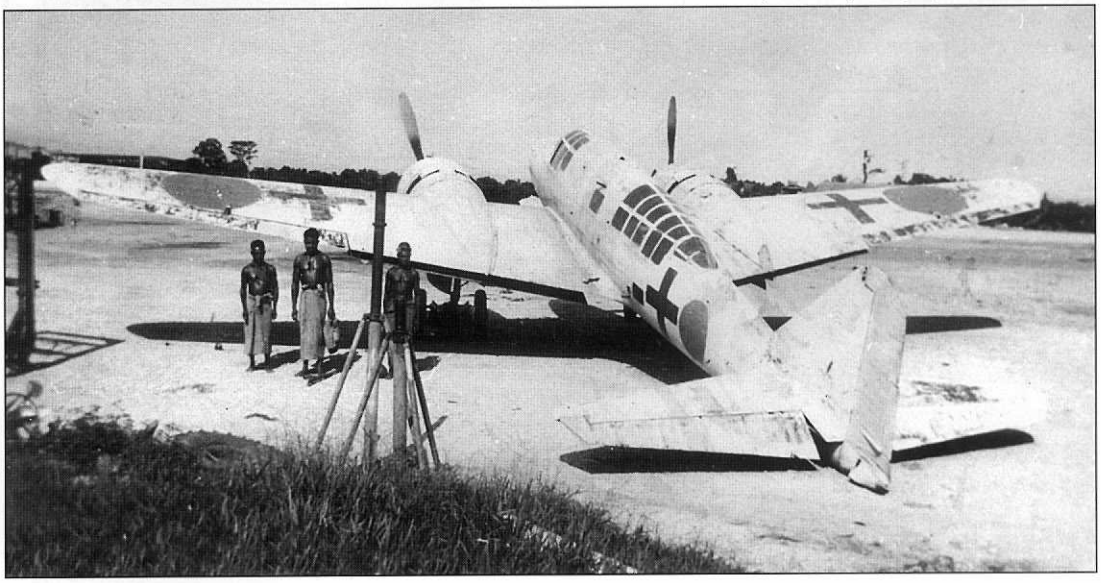


The Type 22 Zero on Bougainville, now with its propeller removed and tailplanes removed for shipment to New Zealand. (A. Galbraith)

To New Zealand

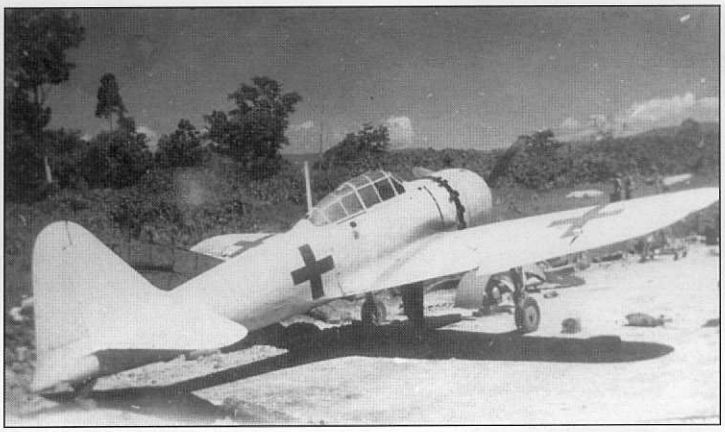
In view of official disinterest in the captured Mitsubishi Type 22 Zero, it seems surprising that it was actually taken to New Zealand as a war prize. The Union Steam Ship Company inter-island ferry *Wahine* was chartered to repatriate RNZAF personnel from the Pacific islands and made three return trips. On the second one, the Zero left Bougainville as deck cargo, on 15 October 1945, under the supervision of Warrant Officer C. Calcinai.

On arrival at the Port of Auckland on Saturday 20 October, transport by barge was arranged to RNZAF Hobsonville. The Zero's surrender scheme was apparently removed at this point revealing a field-applied dark green upper and light blue lower surface, and plain hinomarus with no white outlines. Maintenance work was carried out under the



The Mitsubishi Ki.46-II 'Dinah' reconnaissance aircraft, which was flown into Jacquinot Bay along with three Zeros. The Ki.46 suffered damage to the undercarriage on landing and was no longer flyable.

Note the green crosses are painted alongside the Hinomarus, rather than over them, as the Surrender Scheme specified. (J. Regan)



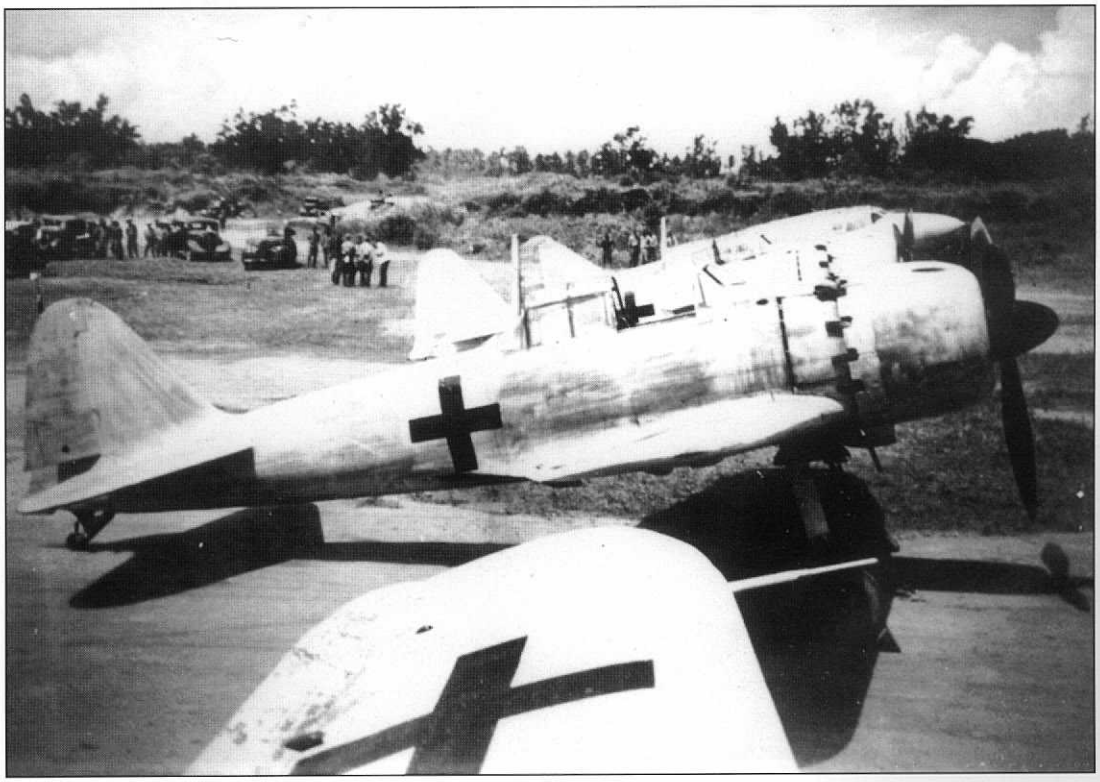
A surrendered Mitsubishi A6M5 Type 52 'Zero' flown on 'joy-rides' by RNZAF pilots. The other two Zeros, which flew into Jacquinot Bay at the same time, were given to the Australians. (J. Regan)

supervision of Squadron Leader F.W. Thornton with the intention being to use the Zero at a series of airshows for the civilian population.

There were, of course, no spares available. However, a group of Japanese POWs passing through Auckland, prior to repatriation, were taken to view the aircraft and help decipher maintenance instruction labels on the airframe. Little success was achieved as the Japanese, though cooperative, were not specialist aviation personnel. The Air Department directed Hobsonville to apply RNZAF roundels and the serial number NZ6000 – it is thought that for some reason this didn't happen. On 6 December, Wing Commander A. E. Willis (Officer Commanding Hobsonville), took the aircraft out onto the airfield for taxiing trials and then advised the Air Department that all work was completed and the Zero was ready for a test flight. Six days later, on 12 December, the

On 18 September 1945, four Japanese aircraft, with an escort of RNZAF Corsairs, were flown by Japanese crews into the RNZAF base at Jacquinot Bay, New Britain. They comprised three A6M5 Type 52 (two being serial No.s 3479 and 4043) and a Mitsubishi Ki.46-II 'Dinah' serial No.2783.

Note the group of Japanese personnel in the background. (J. Regan)



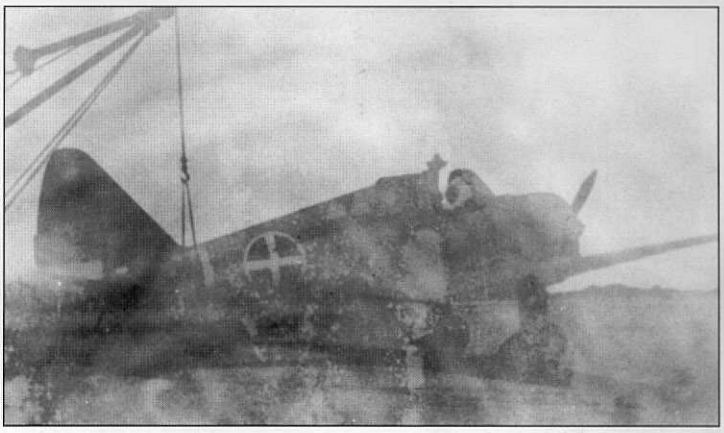
This Aichi E13A1 'Jake' floatplane, was flown into Jacquinot Bay, New Britain, on 14 October. This remained moored in the harbour until a leak developed in a float and the machine sank. Note the particularly dense white paint covering the underwing hinomaru. (J. Regan)

Hobsonville Unit History records that Wing Commander Willis took the aircraft onto the airfield for further taxiing trials.

On the 18th, the Air Force Member for Supply, Air Commodore S. Wallingford, advised the Minister of Defence that, 'the Zero is now serviceable and will be flight tested within two or three days. After tests it is proposed to allot the aircraft to the Central Fighter Establishment at Ardmore, where it will be used for tactical training of fighter pilots.' However, despite his optimism, this test flight was never authorised.

Some consideration was given to sending the aircraft to the Central Flying School at Wigram, but the consensus was that it would be of little use if restricted to straight-and-level flying. With this, and the complete lack of spares and servicing information, enthusiasm began to wane.

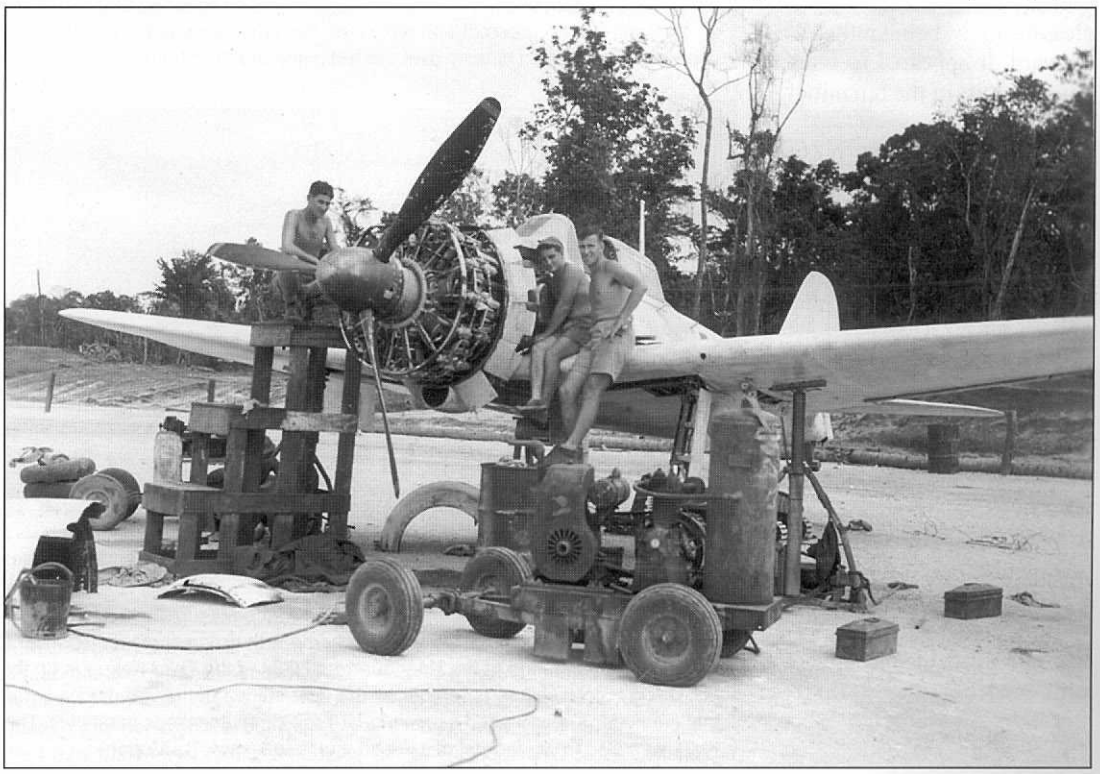
The arrival of the RNZAF's first jet, a Gloster Meteor F.3, in the last few days of 1945 didn't help. Impressive jet demonstration flights around the country made the Zero look quite dated.



The Tachikawa Ki.36 'Ida' was designed for Army Cooperation at the front lines. This one, acquired by Australian troops, is in another variation of surrender markings. Although this image is of very poor quality, an Australian soldier can be seen standing on the port wing, adjacent to the cockpit. (S. Webb)

Later years

Fortunately, there was still enough interest for Wing Commander Willis, as C.O. Hobsonville, to authorise himself one ten-minute flight in the



Another photo of one of the Mitsubishi Type 52 Zeros, surrendered to the RNZAF, being serviced by RNZAF groundcrew members. (J. Regan)

The Tachikawa Ki.54 'Hickory' light transport that carried General Baba and the Japanese surrender delegation, from North Borneo to Labuan Island in September 1945, for the Japanese formal surrender to Major General Wooten, GOC (General Officer Commanding) 9th Division, Australian Infantry Force. It appears to be camouflaged in a green scribble pattern over natural metal scheme. The crude surrender crosses are painted over the fuselage hinomaru, but inboard of them under the wing. Although the Allies specified that surrender crosses were to be green, these are white. Perhaps this was to provide some contrast when applied directly over the red hinomaru. (L. Mutton)

Zero. The date of this flight was not recorded, but evidence suggests it was on 12 December 1945. Willis recalled that it was at about the time he reported on the brakes. He found; 'The aircraft was quite pleasant to fly, being rather like a Harvard. It appeared to have no unusual traits in the ten minutes I was flying.'

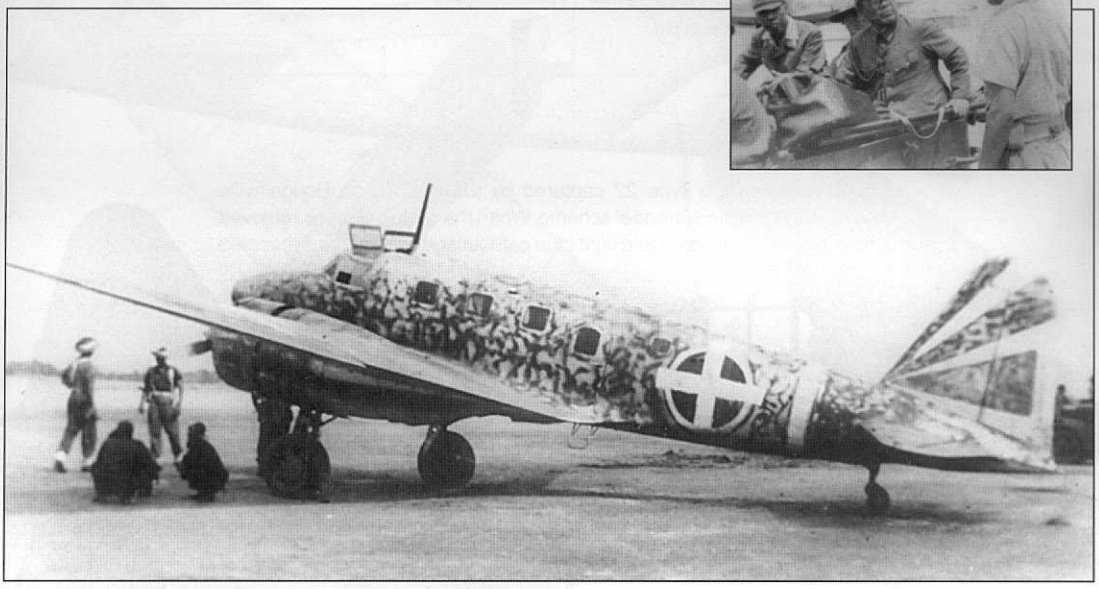
For many years NZ6000 languished in a state of neglect at one airbase after another. In 1958 it was repainted in a spurious two-tone camouflage scheme and superficially repaired for display on a plinth at RNZAF Ohakea, as part of the Air Force's 21st Anniversary celebrations.

In 1959 the Zero was finally given space at the National War Memorial Museum, Auckland, where it is still on permanent public display. In the late 1990s comprehensive restoration work was carried out and an accurate wartime colour scheme applied to this rare surviving example of an early-model Zero.

A view of the Tachikawa Ki.54 showing the upper wing surrender crosses inboard of the hinomaru, which were retained.

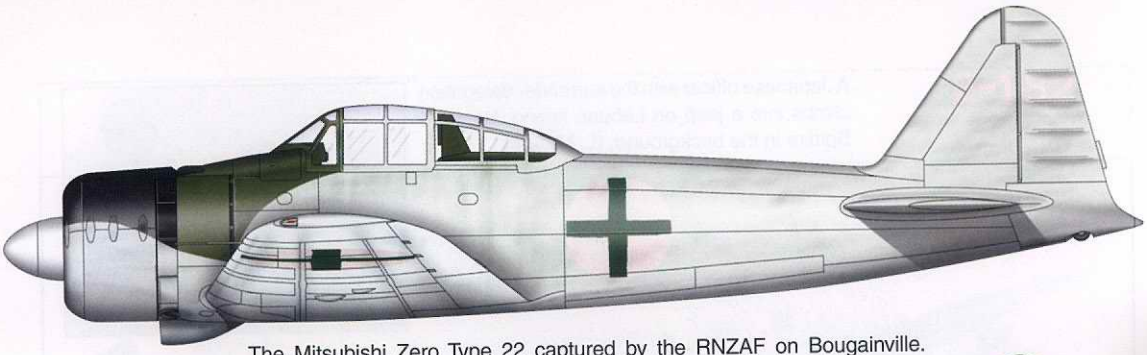
Also on Labuan was this Japanese Army Air Force Mitsubishi Ki.21-IIa 'Sally' bomber in the correct white surrender scheme with green crosses. However it has retained the badge of the Headquarters Flight of the Third Kokugun on the tail. Being outclassed as a bomber by the later stages of the war, such aircraft that survived were still used as Headquarters Communications machines. This Ki.21 was also taken to Australia but its fate is unknown. (L. Mutton)

A Japanese officer with the surrender delegation climbs into a jeep on Labuan Island. Note the Spitfire in the background. (L. Mutton)

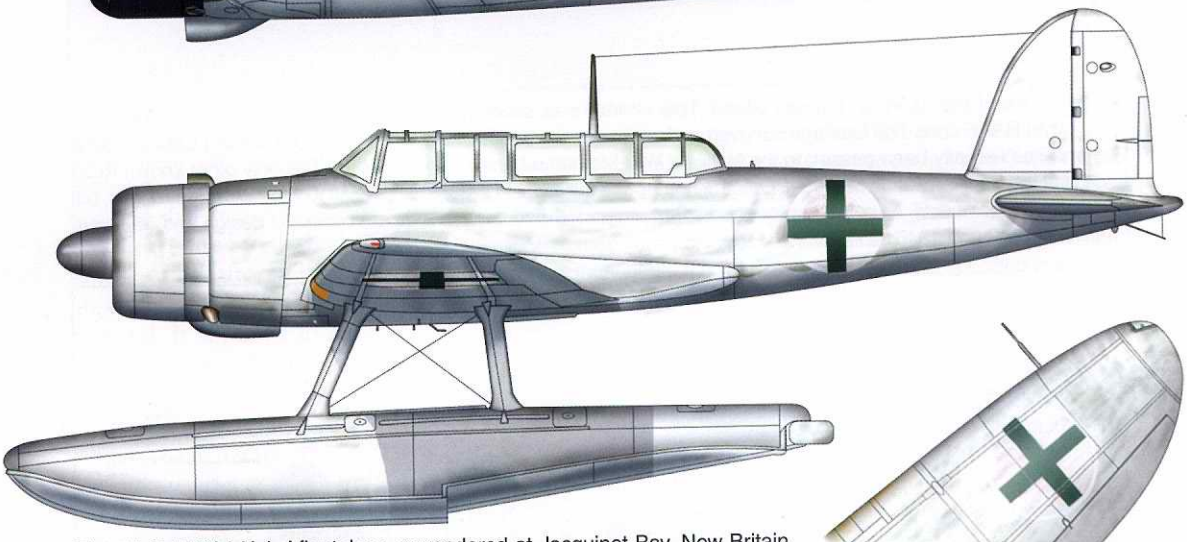


A port side view of the Ki.54 on Labuan Island. This aircraft was subsequently flown (one source says shipped) to Australia by an RAAF crew. The fuselage survived and came into the hands of the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, Victoria in 1980 and has recently been passed to the National War Memorial Museum in Canberra. The only other known Ki.54 fuselage is at the Bejing Aviation Museum, China. Another Ki.54 made it to Wright Field, Ohio to wear USAF markings, but apparently no longer exists. As a crew trainer and light transport, the Ki.54 was a most successful design and 368 were built between 1940 and 1945. (L. Mutton)

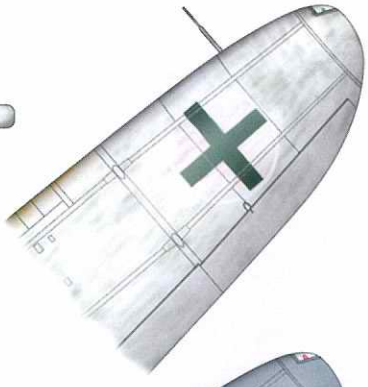
A Mitsubishi Ki.51 'Sonia' of the Japanese Army Air Force on Labuan Island, surrounded by RAAF 4 Squadron Boomerangs. This two-seat ground-attack and tactical reconnaissance aircraft was later acquired from 4 Squadron by 1 Squadron personnel and test flown by several pilots. It has the correct green surrender crosses, but with only white outlines rather than the overall white scheme specified by the Allies. Ki.51s served throughout the war, with 2,338 being built. (L. Mutton)

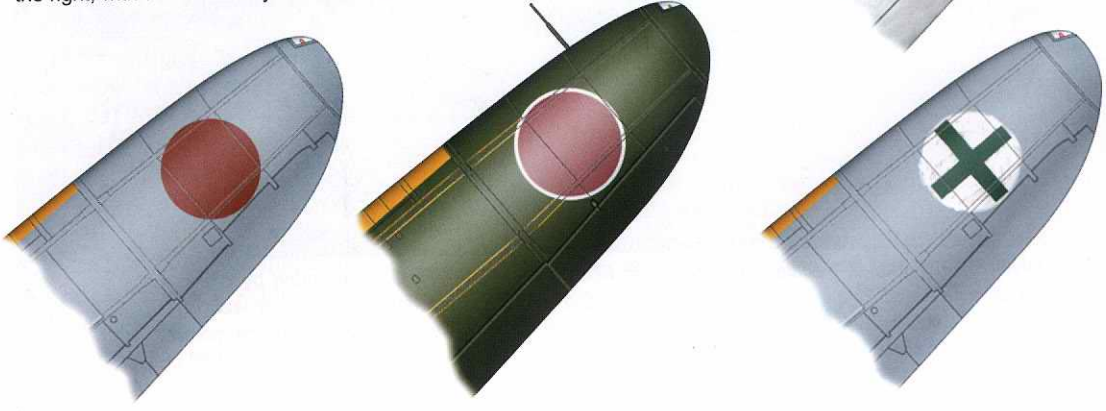


The Mitsubishi Zero Type 22 captured by the RNZAF on Bougainville. Above, with it's white surrender scheme. When the white paint was removed, a field-applied dark green and light blue camouflage scheme was revealed.

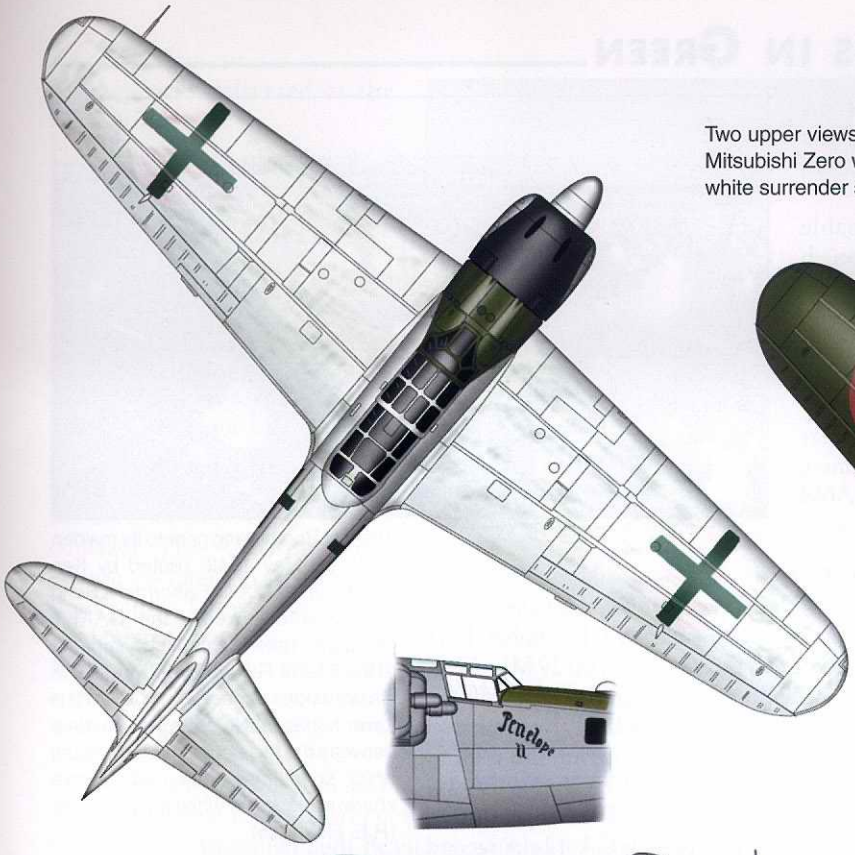


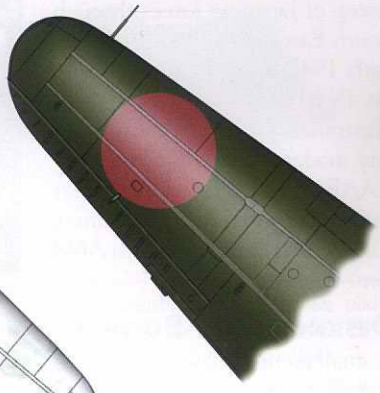
The Aichi E13A1 'Jake' floatplane surrendered at Jacquinot Bay, New Britain, on 14 October. It wears a white surrender colour scheme with green crosses. Below are wing scrap views before the surrender scheme was applied and to the right, with the hi-visibility white scheme applied.

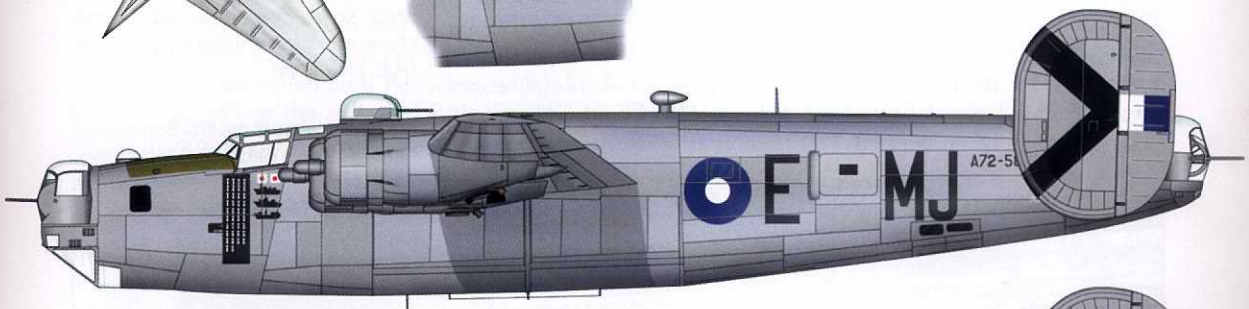




Two upper views of the RNZAF Mitsubishi Zero with and without the white surrender scheme.

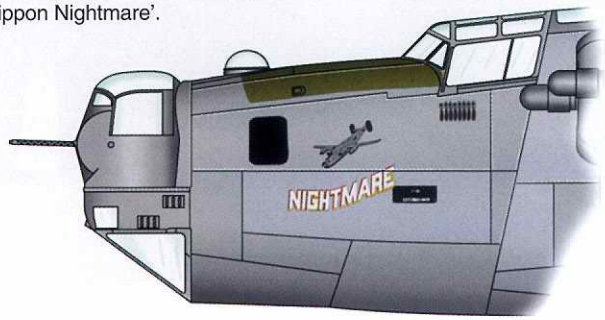


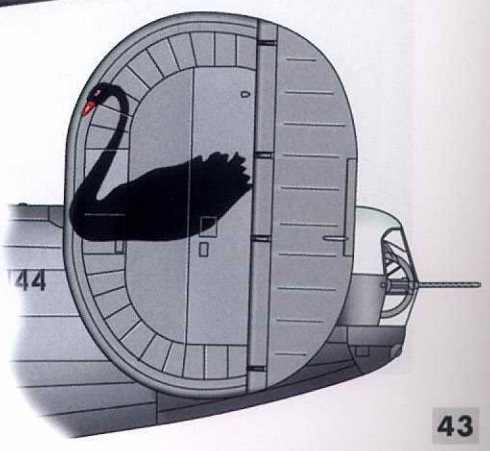




RAAF B-24 Liberator A72-58 'MJ-E' of No. 21 Squadron piloted by Flight Lieutenant Robert Butler, 1945.

Wing Commander John Hampshire's No.25 Squadron B-24, A72-144, as it appeared immediately postwar. It had previously been named 'Nippon Nightmare'.

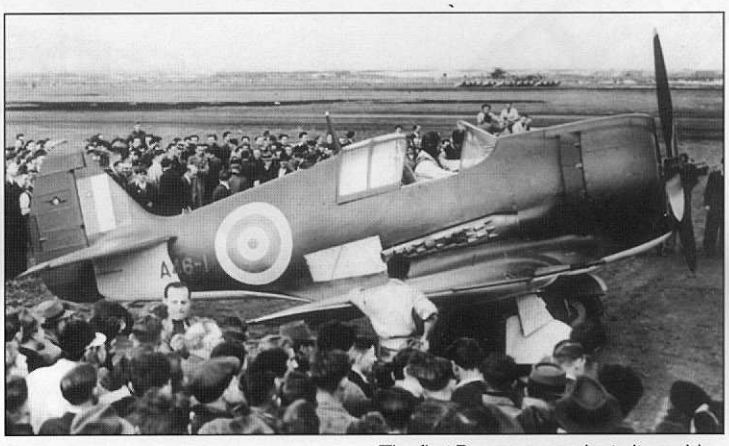




Boomerangs in Green

The Commonwealth Boomerang is a testament to the old adage that necessity is the mother of invention.

The seemingly unstopable sweep of Japanese forces through South East Asia in late 1941 and early 1942, after their Navy's raid on Pearl Harbour, caught the Australian Government without any modern fighter aircraft. The RAAF would need a fighter to meet the threat posed by the Japanese Ki.43 'Oscar' and Mitsubishi A6M Zero types.



The first Boomerang prior to its maiden flight, 29 May 1942, piloted by Ken Frewin, at the C.A.C. Fishermans Bend facility. A46-1 wears the RAAF's standard fighter camouflage scheme at the time of *Foliage Green* and *Earth Brown* upper surfaces with *Sky Blue* lower surfaces. Note the low-contrast between the two upper surface colours which sometimes appear as a single shade in black and white photographs. (R.E. Hourigan)

Design of the Boomerang

A small group of designers at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation began *officially* working on the Boomerang from 21 December 1941 and, less than five months later, the first prototype flew on 29 May 1942.

There were only two major variants of the Boomerang, the Mk I of which 200 were manufactured and the Mk II of which there were 49 examples. One experimental airframe was built bringing the total to 250. The frequently published designations CA-12, CA-13, CA-14/CA-14A and CA-19 relate to CAC contract numbers. The first production contact was for 105 Boomerang Mk Is, produced as CA-12s. A second batch of 95 Mk Is was delivered as CA-13s and finally a third batch, 49 Boomerang Mk IIs produced as CA-19 aircraft. The one experimental

A port side view of the first Boomerang at Fishermans Bend. (S. Mackenzie)

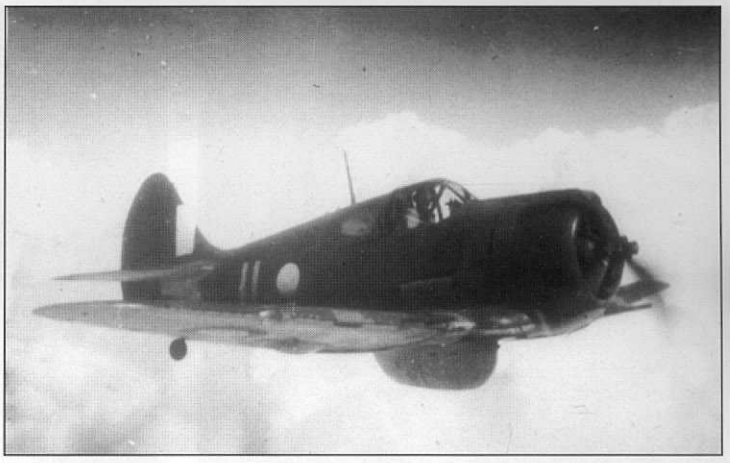
airframe was delivered as the CA-14/14A.

CA-12 to CA-13 production batch changes

The only significant differences specific to the change between the CA-12 and CA-13 production batches were; repositioning the rudder pedals higher and the raising of the left side instrument shelf. Other minor improvements were made as production proceeded; for example, the flame-damper exhaust was first fitted to CA-13 A46-126, the 20th machine of the CA-13 contract. This 'Christmas tree' exhaust was similar in appearance to that fitted to Australian manufactured Beaufighters, but was larger in diameter and tapered along its length.

The first production batch, the 105 CA-12s, was finished in June 1943 and some of the improvements to the CA-13s were the result of operational experience with No.84 Squadron. This squadron was based at Harn Island, Queensland, and had been the first to re-equip with Boomerangs, in March 1943.

The Boomerang was powered by a Pratt & Whitney R-1830-S3C4-G. Contrary to what is frequently published, this was a different engine to that fitted to Australian built Beauforts, which used the locally made R-1830-S1C3-G or the imported R-1830-S3C3-G. The Boomerang engine incorporated a two-stage supercharger necessary for high altitude operation. As things turned out however, the Boomerang was mainly operated at low altitude in an army cooperation role.



Flight Lieutenant J. Furniss pilots Boomerang Mk I A46-11 of No.2 OTU, near Mildura, 25 October 1943.

A46-11 is camouflaged in *Foliage Green* and *Earth Brown* upper surfaces with *Sky Blue* lower surfaces and the code number '11' is in yellow.

Note the Rarely photographed belly tank, generally only used for ferry flights. (J. Hopton via R.E. Hourigan)

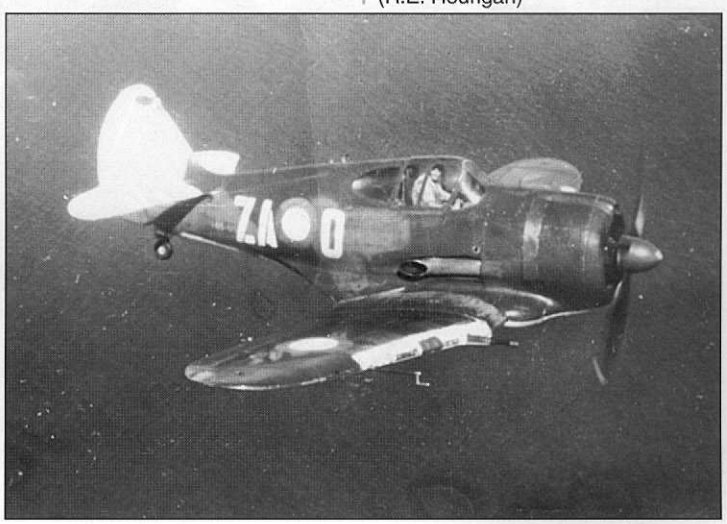
BOOMERANG CAMOUFLAGE COLOURS

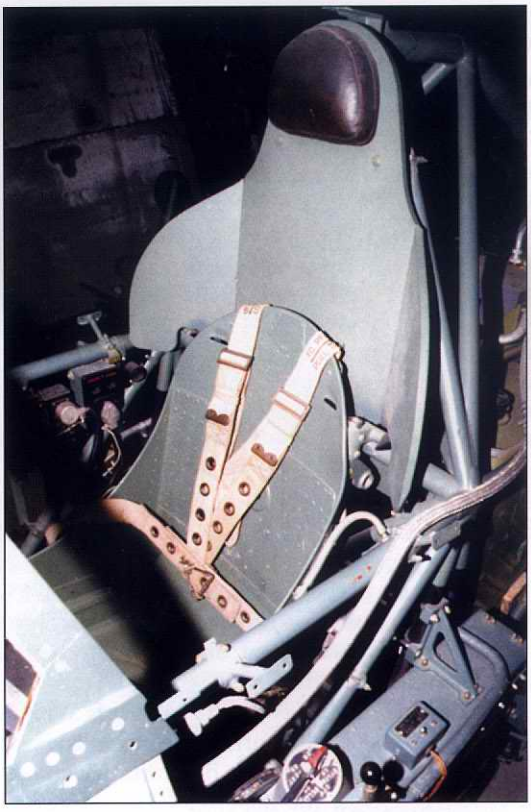
It seems likely that only Australian manufactured camouflage paint was applied to Boomerangs. No Australian Government documents have been uncovered since WW II to indicate that British RAF colours were ever applied to them. Wartime CAC documents state that BALM (the paint manufacturer) *Foliage Green*, BALM S13983 (FS equivalent 24092), *Earth Brown*, BALM S13982 (FS equivalent 20099) and *Sky Blue* BALM S13046 (FS equivalent 25550) were in use at the CAC factory in November 1941, well before Boomerang design started. The RAAF document officially introducing these colours is dated 31 July, 1942.

Whilst it is not impossible, it is most unlikely that any Boomerangs were repainted in RAF colours; ie. RAF *Dark Green* and *Dark Earth*.

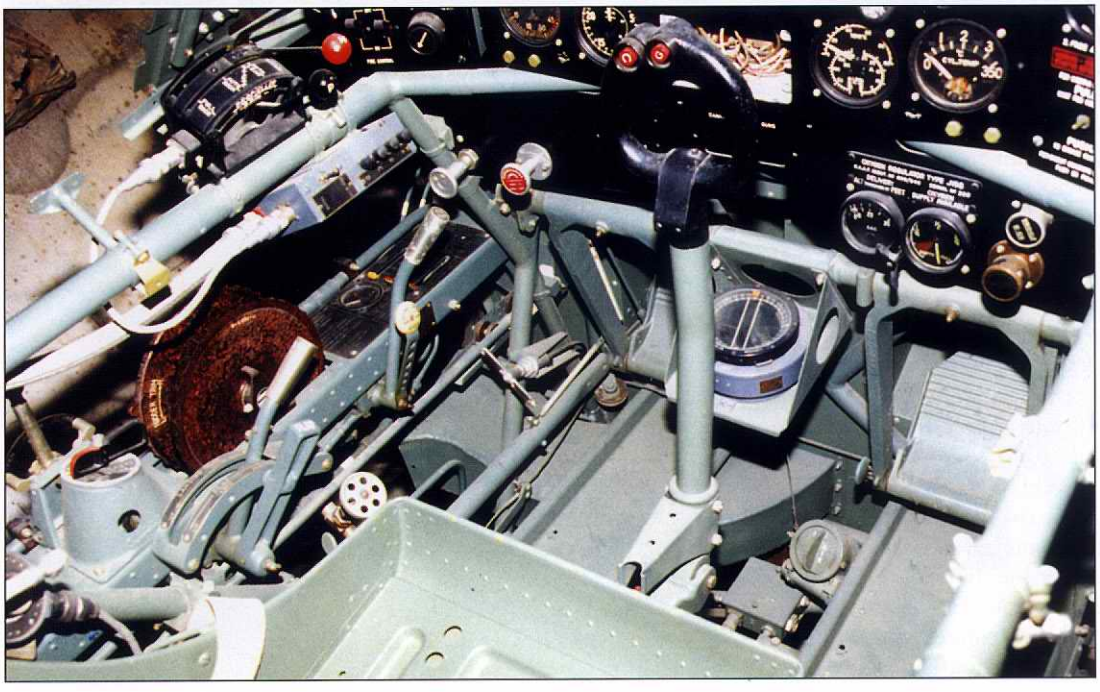
Newly painted, two-tone upper surface camouflage schemes, of

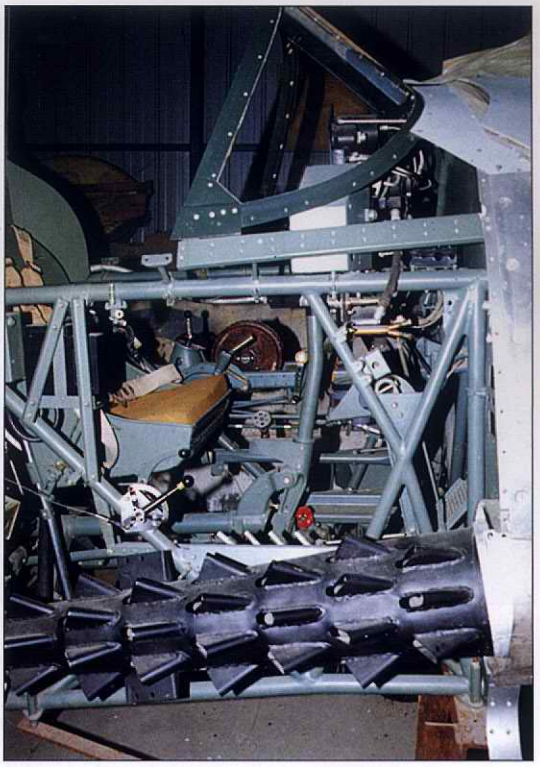
Boomerang Mk I A46-95, 'ZA-O', of No. 8 Communications Unit. This aircraft was delivered new in May 1943, and survived the war. No. 8 C.U. operated from Goodenough Island, New Guinea from February to August 1944 and this photo was almost certainly taken during that deployment. (R.E. Hourigan)

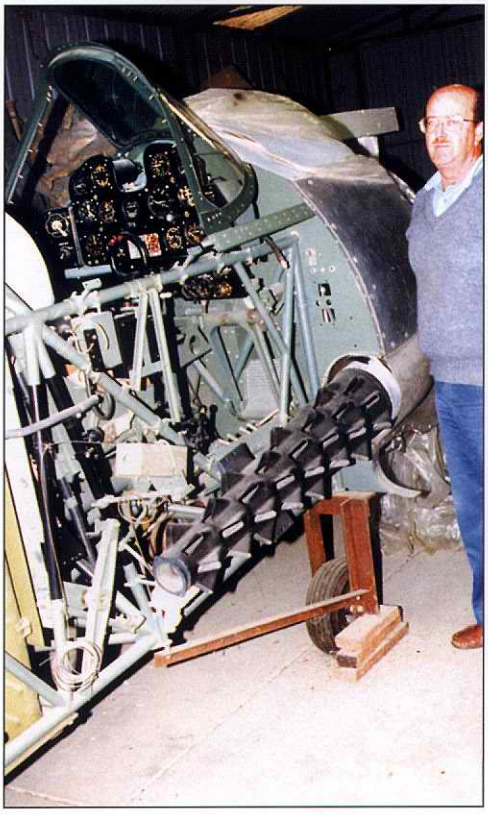


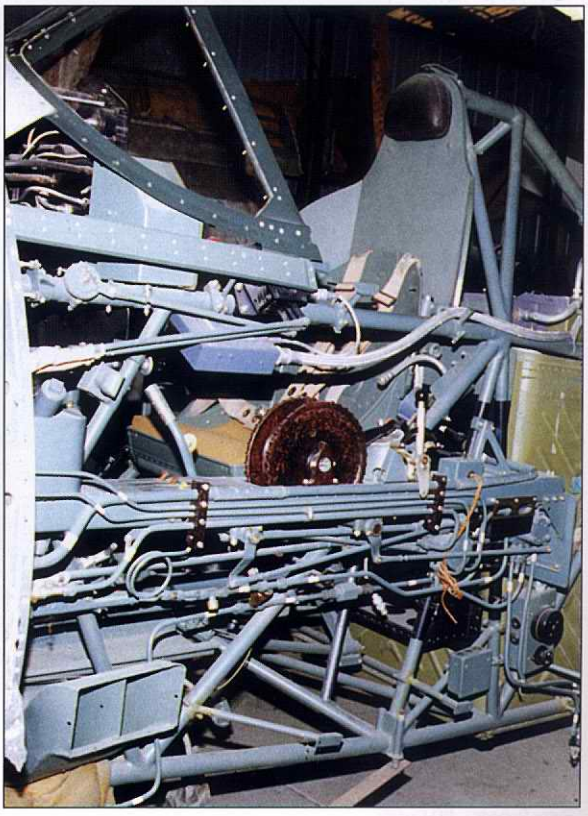


Seven photographs of the Boomerang Mk I (CA-12) owned by Richard Hourigan (pictured lower right), of Melbourne, Australia. The only significant improvements between the CA-12 and 13 cockpits were the higher position of the rudder pedals and the raising of the left side instrument shelf by 50mm. The purpose of these modifications was to allow the pilot to sit more horizontally and be better able to withstand 'G' forces in high speed manoeuvres. (D. Frowen)









Boomerang Mk II A46-195 'QE-A' of No.4 Squadron. This well-worn machine named 'Phooey' is in an overall *Foliage Green* scheme, Labuan Island, 1945. (F. Smith via R.E. Hourigan)

Foliage Green and *Earth Brown* often appear as a one-colour scheme in poor quality black & white photos, because both colours are quite dark. However the paints age differently with the *Earth Brown* lightening and losing chroma (becoming greyer) more quickly. Some fighter squadrons also adopted the practice of hand polishing their Boomerangs for extra speed. This also had the added effect of merging the two colours in black & white photos.

Original Boomerang panels in the possession of Richard E. Hourigan of Victoria, Australia are finished in *Foliage Green*, *Earth Brown* and the very pale RAAF *Sky Blue*. These paints are a matt nitrocellulose lacquer, noted for fading and weathering rapidly in tropical conditions.

New Boomerangs were finished in *Foliage Green*, *Earth Brown* and *Sky Blue* until May 1944, when the overall *Foliage Green* scheme was introduced.

Foliage Green

Controversy still persists over the true shade of *Foliage Green*. It appears that there was more than one shade with different batches of paint and different paint manufacturers producing a degree of variation in *Foliage Green*. Added to this are the extremely harsh conditions under which most Boomerangs operated, which rapidly weathered their paint. For Boomerangs, a good approximation is FS 34092, which is available from most hobby paint manufacturers (Gunze #302, Humbrol #149, Model Master (acrylic) #50164 (enamel) #1764, and Xtra Colour # X114).*

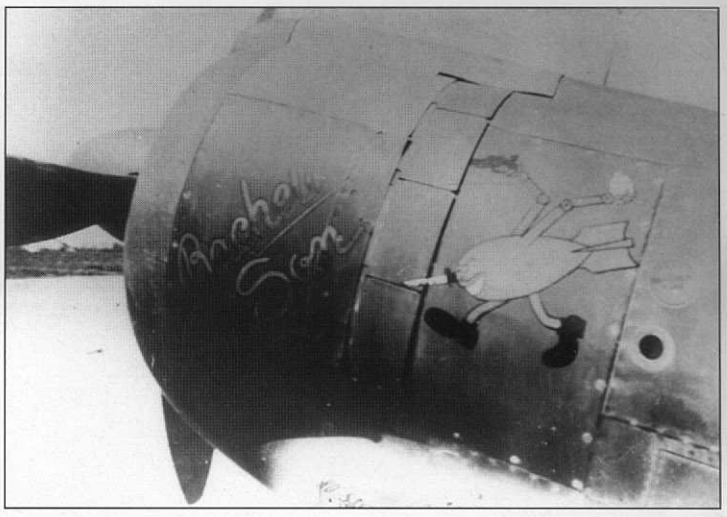
From the left are McCann, Sisson, Anton, Pilot Officer Rae (pilot), G. Chambers and Elliot, standing in front of A46-195 'Phooey'.

Chambers was responsible for the nose art on most No.4 Squadron Boomerangs. (R.E. Hourigan)

* Peter Roberts – PD Decals

Interior colours

The main instrument panel and right side electrical box was dull black (a satin as distinct from matt finish); inside of engine cowling panels, dull aluminium; cockpit front bulkhead, armour-plate, cockpit frame members, canopy interior framing, seat, right side instrument shelf and other metal fittings, *Cockpit Green Enamel* (FS 24226 is a good match); engine crankcase, *Battleship Grey Engine Enamel*; cylinders gloss black and engine mounts aluminium. The guns canvas recoil spring covers were green. The interior of wheel wells and centre section were *Zinc Chromate Aviation Primer* yellow. This primer was often applied as a thin wash, resulting in a semi-transparent finish. Inside of landing gear doors were dull aluminium. Interior piping was bare aluminium. The formation lights, on both sides of the forward fuselage, had dark blue lenses.



The nose art on A46-209, 'Bachelor Son' 'QE-J' of 4 Squadron. (M. Rouge via R.E. Hourigan)

No.4 Squadron Boomerangs

Most of the photographs published here are of 4 Squadron, based in New Guinea, which received its first Boomerangs in July 1943. The squadron worked in the army cooperation and tactical reconnaissance roles. They also marked targets for ground-attack squadrons and the pilots used their twin cannon to good effect in strafing work.

The work of the squadron in New Guinea was extremely hazardous. Pilots frequently returned with foliage or debris attached to the airframe,

Boomerang Mk II A46-209 'Bachelor Son' of 4 Squadron, following a crash-landing at Labuan, on 2 August, 1945. (K. Bircham via R.E. Hourigan)

The nose-art of Boomerang Mk II A46-193 'QE-H' 'Struth!'. (G. Chambers via R.E. Hourigan)

Boomerang Mk II A46-193 'QE-H' 'Struth!', of No.4 Squadron, Labuan, September 1944.
From the left are Flight Lieutenant Val Walliker, Flight Lieutenant Ken Stansfield, Flight Lieutenant Ray Murdock, Flying Officer Les Mason and Flight Lieutenant John Sutton DFC. (P. Cockburn via R.E. Hourigan)

A No.4 Squadron Boomerang Mk II, A46-137, in the Nadzab area, February 1944. This machine's camouflage scheme is *Foliage Green* and *Earth Brown* upper surfaces with *Sky Blue* lower surfaces. The tail of a B-25 is in the foreground. (via J. Regan)

or damage from anti-aircraft or small arms fire. Continuously watching the ground at low level and low speed made them 'sitting ducks' for roaming Japanese fighters, and to add insult to injury, they were sometimes shot at by allied ground and air forces as well! The Boomerang and Wirraway were the only Allied single radial engine types in the area at the time, and were often mistaken for Japanese aircraft, resulting in some tragic losses of pilots and aircraft.

The squadron supported the Lae Coast and Bogadjim campaigns in late 1943 and early 1944, from bases at Gusap and Nadzab. A detachment was also based at Cape Gloucester in early 1944, to support the US Marines, plotting movements along Japanese escape routes from Arawe and Gasmata, to the Gazelle Peninsula. No.4 Squadron generally operated as small detachments. However, for a short time in September 1944, all its aircraft and personnel were based at Nadzab. More detachments were soon dispersed to Madang to cover Bogadjim, Erina and Angoram, and to Tadji for tactical reconnaissance of the Sepik River.

Captured Japanese maps and diaries confirm the accurate and harassing work successfully performed by the squadron. On a sortie, pilots often identified enemy positions by flying low and slow to actually draw their fire, thus giving away their position to the pilot. One former pilot recalled an incident where a Boomerang spent more than two hours flying around

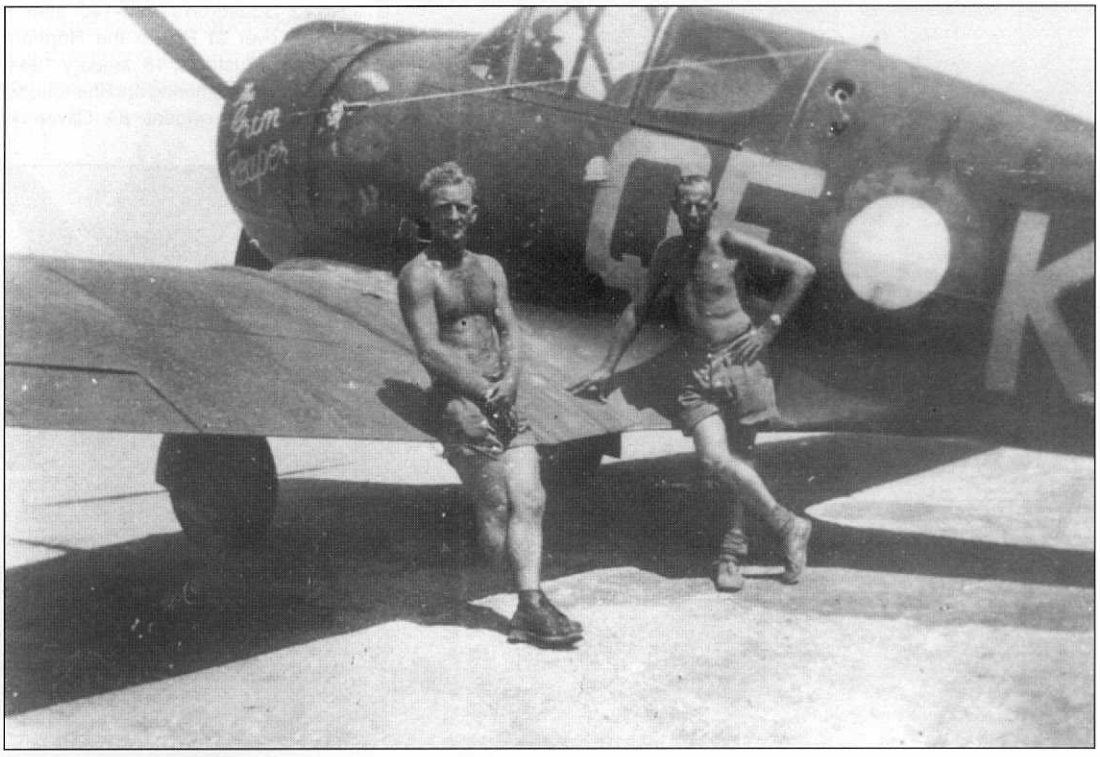
A close view of the nose art on Boomerang Mk II A46-179, 'Bouncing Bid'. (R.E. Hourigan)

Boomerang Mk II A46-179, 'QE-W', was operated by No.4 Squadron in late 1944. This aircraft survived the war and was reduced to components in 1946. Colour scheme is overall *Foliage Green* with white codes and serial. The name 'Bouncing Bid' appeared on the left side only. (R.E. Hourigan)

Another photograph of 'Bouncing Bid' in late 1944. The colour scheme of overall *Foliage Green* is heavily weathered and well worn in places. (R.E. Hourigan)

An interesting photo of the belly of No.83 Squadron's A46-140 after it nosed over at Pell in the Northern Territory, Australia, 18 January 1944. Extensive weathering and the roundel positions are evident. (D. Oliver via R.E. Hourigan)

Flight Lieutenant Walliker, the Officer Commanding No.4 Squadron, with his Boomerang Mk II, A46-194, named 'The Grim Reaper'. (K. Bircham via R.E. Hourigan)



'The Grim Reaper' wore the overall *Foliage Green* camouflage scheme, introduced in May 1944 and had light grey codes. The man on the left is 'Shorty' White. (P. Easton via R.E. Hourigan)

and over a heavily defended ridge recording all the enemy positions. Before departing, the pilot had performed a slow barrel roll along the length of the ridge and later over 100 bullet holes were recorded in his airframe – just another day at the office!

No.4 Squadron moved to Morotai in March 1945, to help 'mop up' the remnants of Japanese forces in that area. In June they moved on to Labuan Island off Borneo, returning to Australia in late 1945. The squadron was eventually re-equipped with C.A.C. Mustangs, in February 1947.

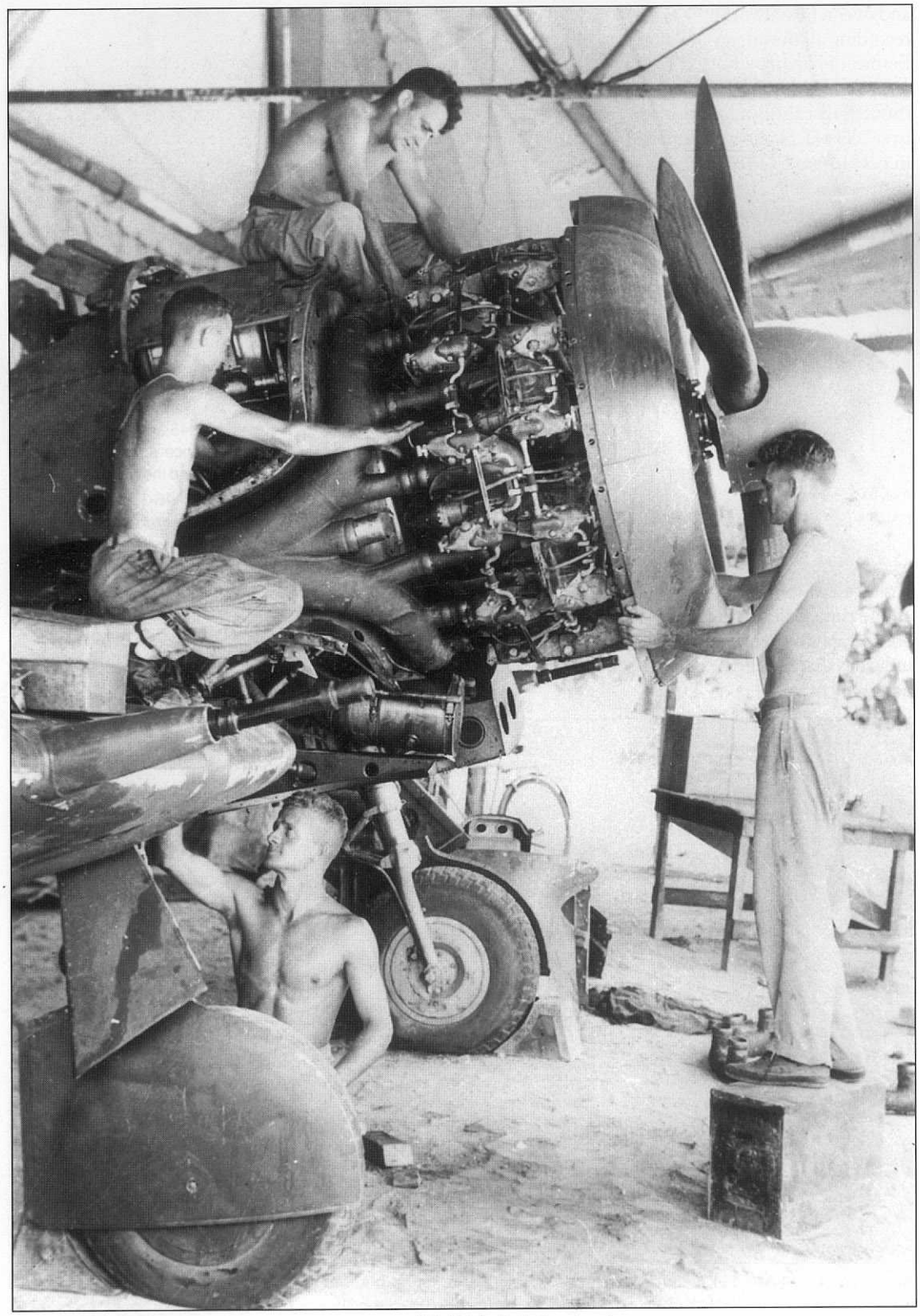
Some interesting nose art also appeared on 83 Squadron Boomerangs. This squadron existed only from February 1943 until December 1945 and it spent it's life as a home defence squadron, based in Queensland and the Northern Territory. 'Wanda Lust' A46-154 was generally piloted by Graham Richardson.

Note the round formation light to the right of the lady's extended leg in this close-up picture. These lights were dark blue and on both sides of the fuselage. (via R.E. Hourigan)

No.4 Squadron aircraft

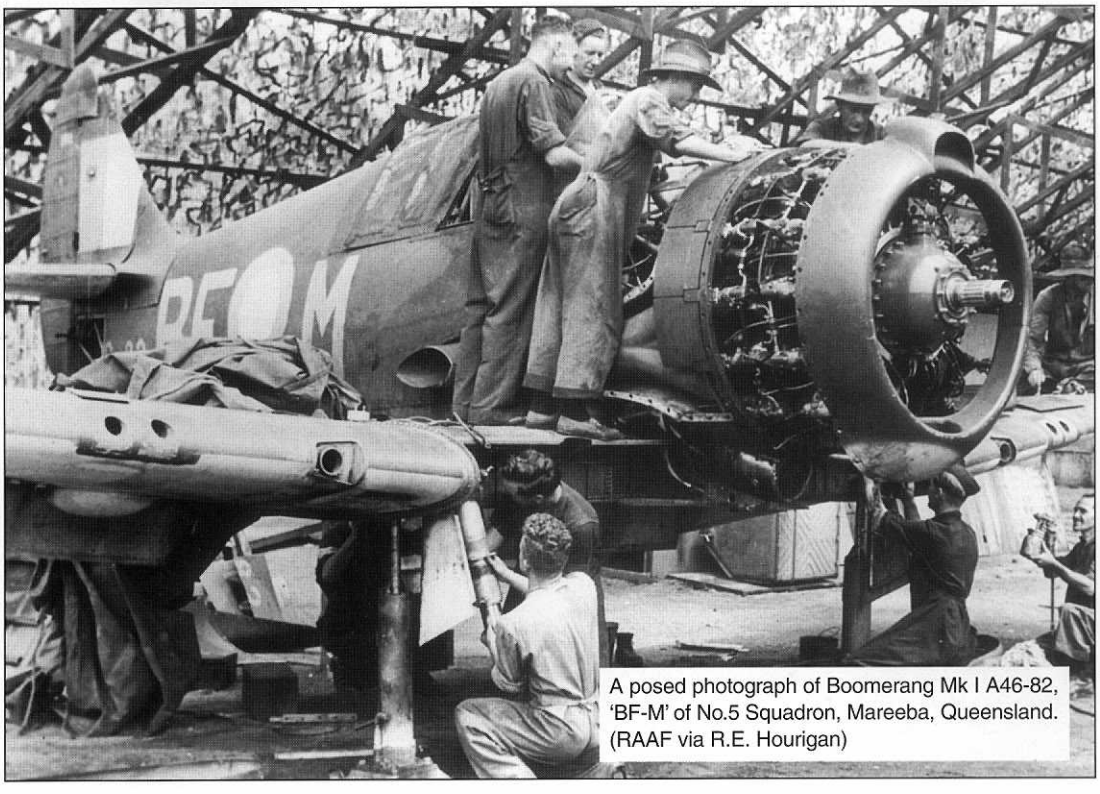
No.4 Squadron Boomerangs were not allocated to specific pilots – each man flew whatever was available. The overall finish of the aircraft was quite flat, especially the overall foliage green aircraft. Wear was rapid, particularly around the exhaust and propeller blades were often worn to bare metal, from mid-blade to tip. Because of the work they undertook, many aircraft also wore patches over battle damage repairs. Evidence has surfaced to suggest that code letters on some RAAF aircraft were, at one time, painted the lower surface *Sky Blue* colour. Examination of photographs by Peter Roberts and others, while sometimes inconclusive, indicates that in the case of No.4 Squadron Boomerangs, they had either light grey or white code letters.

An overall view of A46-154 'MH-J' 'Wanda Lust' at Gove in the Northern Territory, 1944. It's colour scheme is *Foliage Green* and *Earth Brown* upper surfaces with *Sky Blue* lower surfaces. The codes 'MH-J' and spinner are *Sky Blue*. (R.E. Hourigan)



A Boomerang Mk I undergoing engine maintenance. (RAAF via R.E. Hourigan)

Boomerang Mk I A46-47, 'MH-Q' of No.83 Squadron, undergoing maintenance at Gove, Northern Territory, Australia, late 1943. Note that red dope was used to apply fabric patches over the gun ports, to keep out dirt on the ground. (RAAF via R.E. Hourigan)



A posed photograph of Boomerang Mk I A46-82, 'BF-M' of No.5 Squadron, Mareeba, Queensland. (RAAF via R.E. Hourigan)

The officer responsible for bringing the first RAAF B-24 units up to operational status was J.B. (Long John) Hampshire. He had joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1938 aged 20 and recorded his first flight with the RAAF on 27 July that year. By the time war broke out in September 1939, Hampshire had completed pilot training, graded Above the Average, and had almost completed a Navigation Reconnaissance Course at Point Cook.

Hampshire's first operational posting was to No.12 (General Purpose) Squadron at Darwin. In June 1940 he qualified as a First Pilot* on Lockheed Hudsons with 13 Squadron. There he was trained by two well known RAAF personalities: the then Flight Lieutenants Harry Purvis** and 'Sam' Balmer,† who was shortly to become C.O. of the squadron.

Before the Pacific war began, Hampshire left 13 Squadron and was selected to ferry an aircraft in the first group of Beauforts to reinforce Singapore. With Hampshire acting as second pilot to Harry Purvis, the ferry ended abruptly at Batchelor, when their aircraft, T9549, crashed. Deprived of that opportunity to enter the 'real' war, Hampshire was posted to 32 Squadron, at Port Moresby as a Flight Commander, on Hudsons. There, John Hampshire's war became *much* more real. After 7 months with the squadron, he returned to the mainland to take on a couple of non-flying jobs before returning to flying as an instructor on Beauforts at Bairnsdale and Sale, from January to November 1943.

It was at this point that Hampshire was introduced to the aircraft with which he would be forever associated...

A post-war photograph of Wing Commander John Hampshire, centre, with his flight crew. They are standing in front of their 25 Squadron B-24, A72-144 'SJ-A' named 'Nightmare'. (R. Livingstone)

* When not flying solo he flew as second pilot to such distinguished RAAF airmen as Wing Commander 'Moth' Eaton (then O.C. RAAF Station Darwin and later AOC Southern Area) and 'Pedro' Pedrina who was killed supply-dropping in New Guinea in December 1942.

** Purvis had been recruited from civil flying especially to train pilots in the finer points of Hudson handling, as he had been a prewar Lockheed 14 airline pilot. He had also been C.O. of the first RAAF transport squadron, No.36.

† Balmer was later C.O. of 100 Squadron, flying Beauforts, and 467 Squadron RAAF on Lancasters where he lost his life in May 1944.

Heavies for the RAAF

The RAAF had long wanted to operate a long-range heavy bomber, but repeated requests, for an allocation of Liberators, were turned down by the U.S. and Britain. The first aircraft were not received until February 1944, and these were ex-combat aircraft the RAAF relegated to training only. RAAF Liberator squadrons did not begin operations until July 1944, equipped with brand new aircraft ferried from the USA – but, of course, crews had to be trained first.

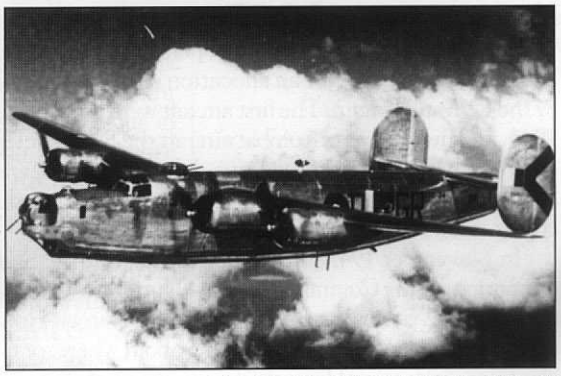
In November 1943, after a quick course at the Staff College and a promotion, Wing Commander John Hampshire was placed in command of the first five crews to be trained on Liberators. However, no-one in the RAAF seemed to know anything about where, or how, this training was to occur, forcing Hampshire to travel up the east coast of Australia making enquiries at each RAAF unit. He moved further and further north until he finally found the receptive ear of Air Commodore Scherger, in Port Moresby! A number of bottles of Scotch changed hands and General Jim Davies, commanding the USAAF 5th Bomber Command, arranged for the five crews to be trained at the American Combat Training Centre, at Charters Towers.

Hampshire, with 1200 hours in Hudsons and Beauforts, was assigned a USAAF instructor (1st Lieutenant Maxwell) and was able to convert to the B-24 in just 20 minutes of circuits as second pilot, prior to continuing in command, with Maxwell as second pilot.

On 6 February 1944, after completion of their Liberator course, the crews were posted to the 65th Squadron of the 43rd Bomb Group at Dobodura and Nadzab, for operational training. Hampshire, on his 35th operational sortie, flew a mission with Lieutenant Smuyerville on 13 February, from Dobodura to Kavieng, followed by a further 10 sorties in command with his own crew.

Liberator A72-4 shortly after it was seriously damaged by fire at Tocumwal, New South Wales, on 2 October 1944. It had been serving with No. 7 OTU and was one of the few RAAF Liberators delivered in the *Olive Drab* and *Neutral Gray* USAAF colour scheme. (J. Regan)

Hampshire was posted from Nadzab to become the first Chief Flying Instructor at No.7 OTU, RAAF, Tocumwal. His tenure was short and by June 1944 he had taken up residence at Manbulloo in the Northern Territory, as C.O. of 24 (Heavy Bomber) Squadron. This was the first RAAF B-24 Liberator Squadron of what was later 82 (Heavy Bomber) Wing, under the Command of Group Captain Brian Kingwell. No.82 Wing was to take over the role of the USAAF bombers, allowing them to move further north. Histories of the 380th Bomb Group, by this time based at Darwin, refer to 24 Squadron as the "5th Squadron" of their Group, but Hampshire always insisted to the writer, that his unit was completely independent of the 380th and that he and his staff made all operational decisions. What is certain is that 24 Squadron initially supplied aircraft to strikes mounted by the USAAF.

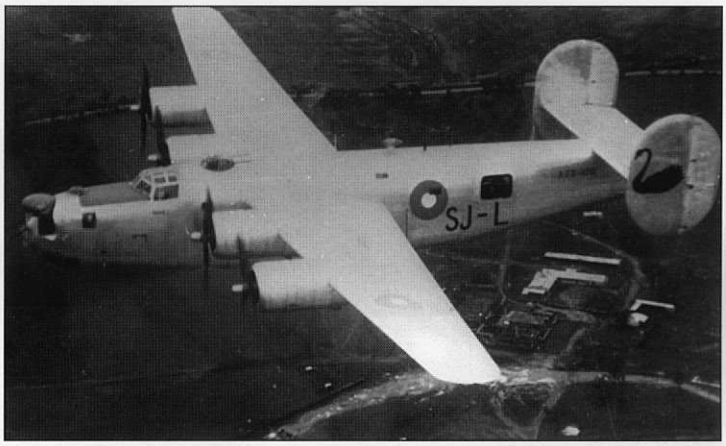


This B-24J, A72-34 'GR-D', of No.24 Squadron, has the simple forward pointing arrowhead on its tail the Squadron was assigned as a formation marking. (R. Livingstone)

Although the Pacific air war was characterized initially by solo long-range penetrations by B-24s, by mid-1944 much larger formation attacks were being mounted. The USAAF B-24 Groups (the 22nd, 43rd, 90th and 380th) had learned that with the sky full of B-24s, distinctive Squadron-in-Group markings were needed so that crews could formate more easily. Based on his experience with the USAAF, John Hampshire introduced a simple tail marking to identify 24 Squadron and, as the other squadrons of 82 Wing arrived in the North West Area, they were allocated a variation of the design. The 24 Squadron marking was a large black arrowhead on the tail, facing forward. No.21 Squadron used the reverse direction and, for 23 Squadron, the arrow pointed down.

A posed photo of No.7 Operational Training Unit crews at Tocumwal, in 1945. This OTU was the single biggest operator of B-24 Liberators in the RAAF and at its peak had 58 on strength. (J. Regan)

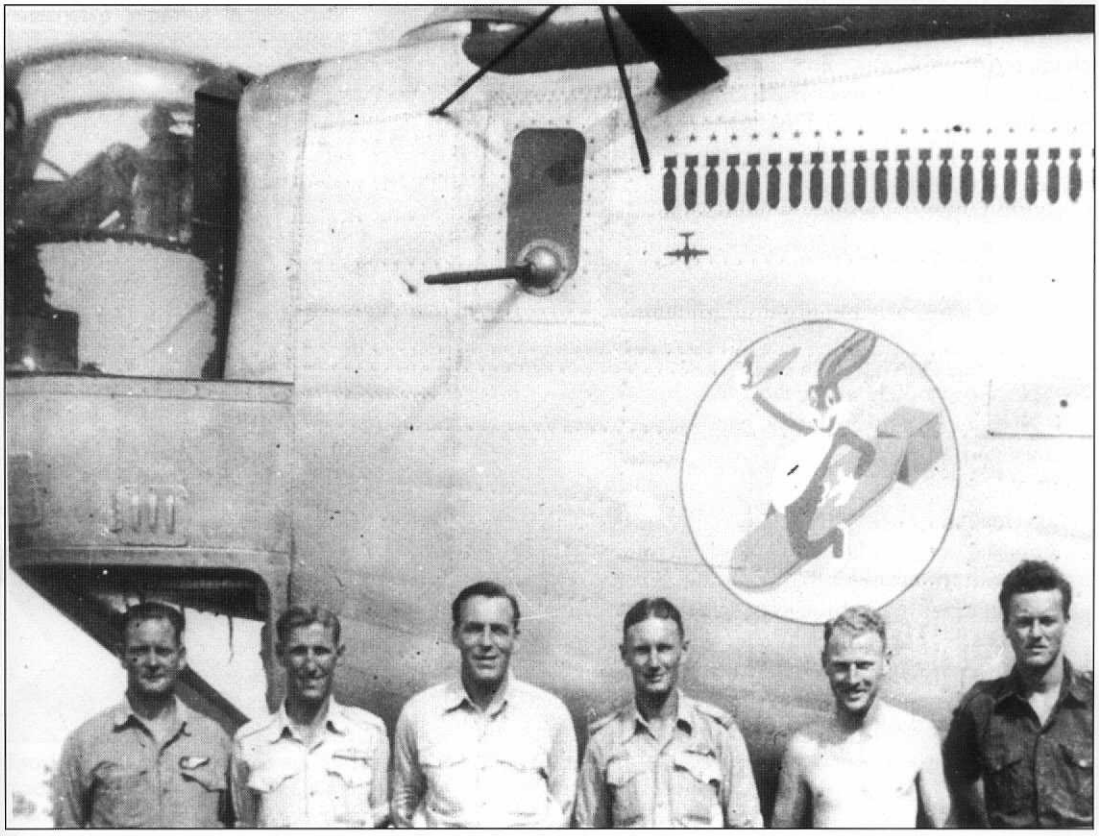
John Hampshire's Pilot Log Book shows that he flew a variety of squadron aircraft operationally. His first B-24 operation, and his 46th for the war, was in A72-38, on 22 September 1944 – despite his administrative duties, John Hampshire led from the front. Hampshire was shaken on 21 November when he pranged the squadron hack, Tiger Moth A17-475, which he managed to flip on its back at Fenton after an engine failure during takeoff. Almost 1500 multi-engine hours, 51 operational flights and 'bitten' by a Tiger Moth! He completed his 54th, and final operational flight, on 16 January 1945.



B-24J Liberator A72-150 of No.25 Squadron, Mid to late 1945. This Squadron spent its entire existence based in Western Australia and adopted that State's Black Swan symbol as its tail marking. (R. Livingstone)

After some leave John Hampshire was selected to form No.25 Liberator Squadron at Cunderdin, Western Australia, in May 1945. Though No.25 was not to see operational service, that was only because of events unknown to the likes of squadron commanders. As an experienced commanding officer, operational pilot, instructor and B-24 pilot, Hampshire was the ideal C.O. for a unit expecting to share the load of a bombing campaign against Japan. He selected A72-144 as his personal

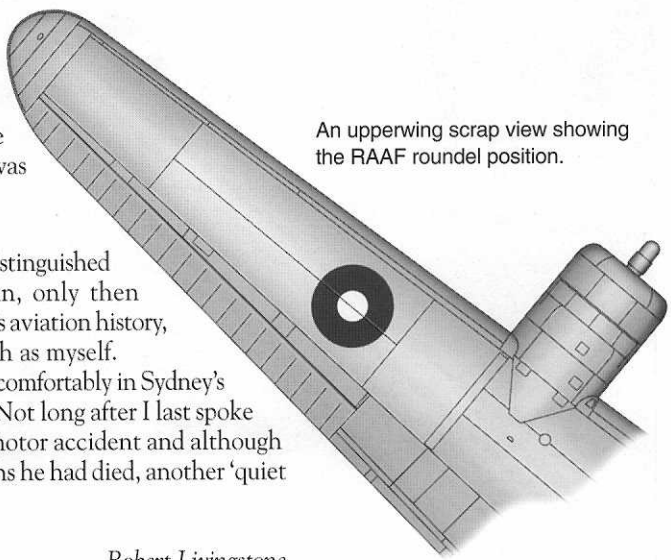
An RAAF Liberator crew beside their aircraft, adorned with mission markings, a fighter 'kill' marking and Bugs Bunny riding a bomb. (J. Regan)



Above and facing page. Two post war photos of an RAAF B-24 Liberator instructional airframe, extensively painted with cartoons. Unfortunately the authors have no other information about this colourful machine. (J. Regan)

aircraft and named it 'Nippon's Nightmare'. In deference to the squadron's name of No.25 City of Perth Squadron, he designed a formation recognition marking for the fins of the B-24s – a large black swan with characteristic red beak. This did much to foster a squadron identity which endures even today. The swan symbol is still worn by today's 25 Squadron Aermacchi MB-326G jet trainers.

Post war John Hampshire oversaw the down-sizing of the RAAF, while in command of 25 Squadron, and later 12 Squadron, still with Liberators. After 25 Squadron was disbanded in 1946, he took over 82 Wing from Kingwell in January 1947. With the arrival of the Australian-built Lincoln, he attended the second Lincoln conversion course at East Sale in June 1947. Still later he flew Lockheed Neptunes with the US Navy, for type familiarisation, though by the time Neptunes entered RAAF service he was 'flying a desk'.



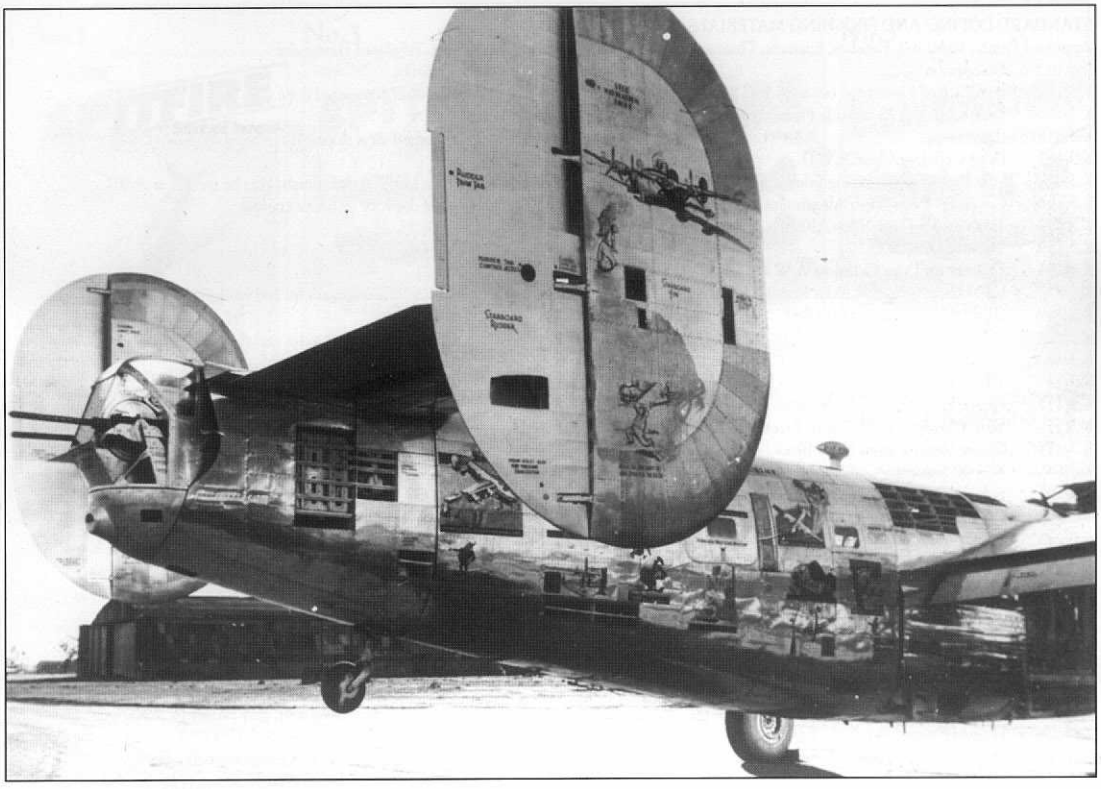
An upperwing scrap view showing the RAAF roundel position.

Postscript

When I met John Hampshire he was a tall, distinguished looking, laconic, archetypical Australian, only then beginning to appreciate his role in Australia's aviation history, and trying to record it through people such as myself.

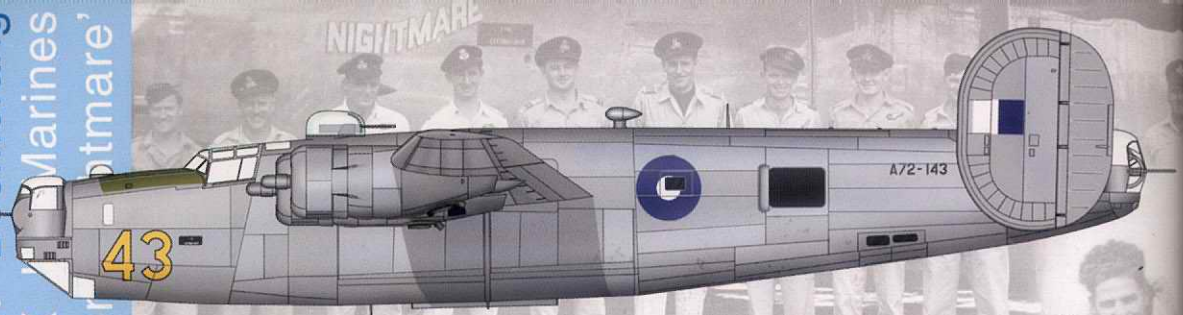
After retirement, John Hampshire lived comfortably in Sydney's leafy northern suburbs, outliving his wife. Not long after I last spoke with him, John was involved in a serious motor accident and although not physically injured, within twelve months he had died, another 'quiet Australian' to whom we owe a great deal.

Robert Livingstone

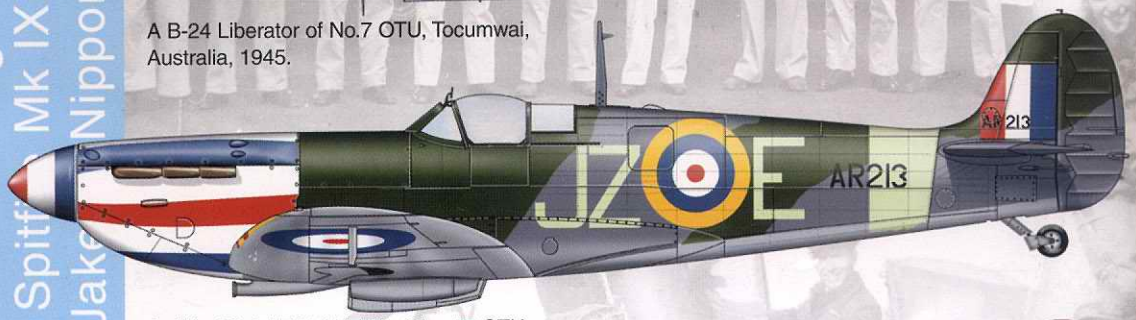


Two Liberators in flight. Nearest the camera is A72-56 of No.21 Squadron, with the other machine being from No.24 Squadron. Both are in the plain RAAF scheme of natural metal overall with an Olive Drab anti-glare panel – as supplied to the USAAF. (J. Regan)

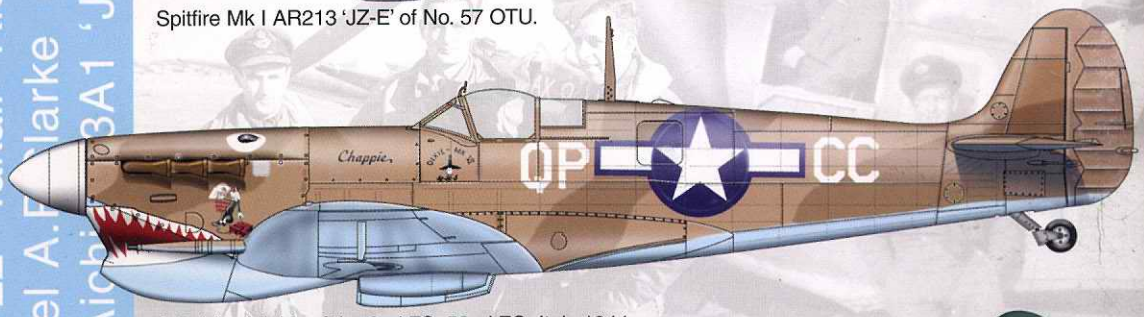
Azure Blue Warren Schrader 'Struth!' Circus No.68 616 Squadron Sky Blue
B-24J Liberator Jeff West 'Zero' Type 22 Takali Richard Hourigan Boomerang
Queens[illegible] Piva Iwakuni Colonel A.F. Clarke Spitfire Mk IX Marines
Douglas [illegible]der 'Bouncing Bid' Aichi B3A1 'Jake' Nippon 'Nightmare'



A B-24 Liberator of No.7 OTU, Tocumwai, Australia, 1945.



Spitfire Mk I AR213 'JZ-E' of No. 57 OTU.



A Spitfire Mk Vc of the 2nd FS, 52nd FG, Italy 1944.
Code 'CC' is provisional.

Boomerang Mk II *Struth!,* 4 Squadron RAAF, Labuan, September 1944.

A Mitsubishi Ki.51 "Sonia", Labuan Island, 1945.